THE ROLE OF CONGRESSIONAL BROADCASTING
IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American democratic theory is predicated on the assumption that members of the electorate should participate actively in the political process. In spite of wide differences of opinion as to how much participation is required, American political history is characterized by continuing efforts to broaden citizen participation in government. But even in the formative years of the Republic, the founding fathers recognized the dangers of unintelligent or uninformed participation, and insisted strongly upon full and free public information as a prerequisite to political action.

The necessity of the public being "informed", therefore, early became a cardinal principle of American democratic philosophy. Yet, for almost one hundred years, the "informed public" concept was accepted as axiomatic, without either elaboration or analysis. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, political scientists commenced to express concern over the apparent lack of progress in achieving the democratic ideal. The problem of political education of the electorate, for example, seemed no nearer solution than it had been when the Republic was formed. Notwithstanding the tremendous strides made in public education and in the dissemination of information, the citizen-voter remained "uninformed" on a wide range of topics and issues upon which he was expected to make rational decisions.
The continuing low level of public information since 1900 has tended to raise doubts as to the efficacy of information in the democratic process, and to inspire the belief that existing channels of communication are unable to keep pace with the public information demands of modern government. For more than fifty years, political and social scientists have sought methods of increasing the effectiveness of the information process, hoping thereby to increase intelligent political participation by the electorate. As early as 1898, a prominent political scientist of that day, Professor Lauros McConachie, made the plaintive but seemingly futile observation:

Were there... provisions for disseminating throughout the country more fully and in better forms information, not only of private, but also of public legislative doings, constituents could form a more intelligent estimate of the work of their representatives, and publicity would have its most beneficial scope.¹

He dreamed of some new invention for the dissemination of knowledge—something which he labelled a "method of legislative extension", which could be trained upon elected representatives and would permit the eye of the citizen to see at first hand how his government was functioning.

Unknowingly, Professor McConachie described most accurately the sensational mid-twentieth century information medium—television. For through television, the method of "legislative extension" has already proved its efficacy as an instrument of public information. In less

than a decade, television has grown to the point where it is available to two-thirds of the nation, and on numerous occasions has brought important governmental proceedings and political events into the living rooms of millions of Americans.

The postwar development of television was marked by a continuing procession of telecasts of governmental proceedings and events of major political significance. On January 15, 1946, President Truman inaugurated legislative broadcasting when his message to Congress was televised—the first television broadcast from the interior of the national Capitol. Three months later, on March 25th, the opening session of the United Nations Security Council was televised over WNBT, New York City. In 1947, the opening of Congress was televised over a three-city network, and three major policy speeches by President Truman, delivered before joint sessions of Congress, were carried by radio and television. The signing of the Japanese Peace Treaty in San Francisco in 1951 inaugurated coast-to-coast television. President Truman was again the chief actor in this nationwide television drama—with an audience whose potential was measured at 40,000,000 as contrasted with the few hundred able to witness the first legislative telecast five years earlier.

But the real evidence of television's might in the realm of public information came somewhat earlier that same year—1951. The Kefauver Crime Commission conducted public investigations in a number of American cities. In each city, the hearings were telecast over local stations.
By the time the Committee reached New York, public interest in the hearings reached its peak, and the televised New York hearings went out over an extensive network including nearly every television station east of the Mississippi River. The impact of the televised hearings upon the public startled even the most blase observers of the political scene. In New York City, business virtually came to a standstill while businessmen and their employees, housewives, and school pupils dropped everything to follow the dramatic story of corruption in their city government. Throughout the nation, press and public alike joined in acclaiming television as opening a new era in the advance of knowledge and in the practice of popular government. A few individuals went so far as to assert that television was the greatest contribution in the communication of knowledge since the invention of printing.

But this opinion was not shared by legislators. The wave of popular interest which followed the televising of the Kefauver investigations inspired broadcasters to look to legislative bodies for other program material. Congressional committee proceedings became a prime target for television cameramen, much to the dismay of the majority of members of Congress. Promptly upon the opening of the 81st Congress in 1952, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Sam Rayburn, imposed a ban on all further broadcasts or telecasts of House committee hearings or other proceedings.

The move brought immediate repercussions. Having tapped a fertile field for public service programming, the broadcasting industry
was loath to surrender without a battle. Furthermore, both radio and television leaders viewed the action of Speaker Rayburn as discrimination between the broadcast media and the press, seeing in this move a violation of freedom of the press. Spokesmen for the major radio and television networks and the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters took a stand demanding the "right" of equal access with the press to all governmental proceedings.

During the remainder of 1952 the legislative broadcasting controversy raged, with the broadcasters enjoying the support of the press and a handful of Congressmen. The elections of 1952 put in a Republican administration which gave heed to the broadcasters' demands for equality with the press. The new Speaker of the House, Joseph W. Martin of Massachusetts, rescinded the Rayburn ban, leaving the decision to permit televising up to the individual committees. He also recommended that clear rules on TV coverage of hearings and proceedings be established "at the earliest possible moment." No action was ever taken on this recommendation, however. Following the lifting of the Rayburn ban, some committees of the House of Representatives permitted broadcasts and telecasts of their proceedings; others did not.

Then in 1954, control of the House once more fell to the Democratic Party, and Sam Rayburn resumed the Speaker's chair. One of his first official acts was to reimpose his previous ban against broadcasting and telecasting and the House of Representatives was again "blacked out" as far as legislative broadcasting was concerned.
During the furor over the Rayburn ban, opinion in the Senate, traditionally conservative, was divided on the issue of legislative broadcasting. No microphones or cameras have ever been permitted in the Senate chamber, but the Senate rules left the decision to permit broadcasting or television coverage of committee hearings to the discretion of the individual committee. Some Senate committees welcomed broadcast coverage with open arms; others did not. With still others, the question has never yet come up for discussion and decision. Yet it was the televising of a Senate committee hearing in the summer of 1954 that most vigorously fanned the flames of opposition to legislative broadcasting. The Army-McCarthy hearings, carried to all parts of the nation by television, intensified the growing sentiment that the televising of witnesses testifying under oath was a violation of the civil rights of the individuals concerned, and contributed to the gross misuse of the investigating committee functions.

In 1954, therefore, legislative broadcasting became inextricably embroiled in the political wrangling over "McCarthyism" and rapidly lost ground even among many of its earlier supporters. A federal court decision in the same year gave encouragement and strength to opponents of legislative broadcasting. The court upheld a witness who refused to testify before a Congressional committee when the proceedings were televised or broadcast. Continued agitation over infringements of the "right of privacy" and concern over rights of witnesses before Congressional investigating committees reduced public demand for legislative broadcasts to a minimum and produced divided opinions.
within the broadcasting industry itself.

Jack Gould, radio-tv critic for *The New York Times*, accurately predicted that the legislative broadcasting question would not be easily or quickly settled. Writing on the day following the conclusion of the crime investigation hearings in New York in 1951, he said:

Attorneys, educators, sociologists, politicians, and broadcasters agreed yesterday that the enormous influence of the crime telecasts, in the long run, would prove every bit as important as the investigation itself. There was widespread disagreement, however, over how and to what extent television should be used in enabling millions of persons to be eye-witnesses to events that heretofore had been only seen by a comparative handful of persons. No one expected an early end to the controversies.  

If anything, the future of Congressional broadcasting is more unsettled five years later than it was at the time Gould made his observation. In fact, opposition to televised hearings, and to legislative broadcasting in general, is extensive and articulate. Arguments against the broadcasting of government proceedings are practical, and possess a degree of legal and moral sanction. Advocates of "legislative extension" by radio and television are left, for the most part, arguing a theoretical principle—the public's "right to be informed"—which in itself is being discredited as lacking in practical application or significance in contemporary politics.

At this writing—the summer of 1955—broadcasting or telecasting of the proceedings of either House of Congress is prohibited.

Proceedings of standing committees of the House of Representatives likewise may not be broadcast. In the Senate, the decision with respect to committee broadcasts is left to the discretion of the respective committee chairmen, most of whom do not look favorably upon the broadcasting of proceedings of their committees.

The situation regarding broadcasting and telecasting of legislative proceedings is much the same in the various state legislatures as it is in Congress. A few states have permitted broadcasting and telecasting of certain of their proceedings. The majority have followed the lead of Congress. The state of New York has gone a step further, making illegal the broadcasting of any state legislative or administrative proceeding.

Even more than legislatures, courts are generally slow to accept innovation. The American Bar Association, various state bar groups, and an overwhelming majority of judges oppose broadcasting of trials. The similarities between a courtroom trial and a legislative investigating committee hearing prompted several state bar associations, as well as the A. B. A., to record their opposition in principle to legislative broadcasting. There is little cause to expect judges of courts on the state or federal level to regard broadcasts of legislative committees any more favorably than does the Bar.

The case for legislative broadcasting has fared little better within the broadcasting industry itself. While the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters, the major networks, and a
number of individual broadcasting stations continue to press their point in favor of "broadcast rights", a majority of individual stations remain completely indifferent to the issue. The press has no lasting interest in the broadcasters' cause. The result is that no real "mobilization of public opinion" has occurred, or is probable. Although the broadcasting industry would logically have the greatest stake in the future development of legislative broadcasting, network spokesmen have conceded that their interest is qualified by practical cost and programming considerations.

In Congress itself, many members frankly admit that the time will come when the role of broadcasting will be better understood, that eventually television will have the same full freedom of access to governmental proceedings now enjoyed by the press. However, the attitudes of the majority of legislators would seem to preclude any decision favoring legislative broadcasting in the near future.

Yet, looking back over the four years since the Kefauver Crime Committee telecasts, what has television contributed to political education? The American public has followed two presidential campaigns by the agency of television, has gone behind the scenes at the political conventions and seen what happens in the "smoke-filled rooms," has debated the case of McCarthy versus the Army as it unfolded before their eyes, and has been present visually and aurally at the opening of Congress, at the inauguration of the President, at meetings of the President's Cabinet, besides attending a series of presidential press
conferences—all by television. To this should be added the personal acquaintance with a host of political figures—Congressmen, Cabinet members, key administrative officials, as well as aspiring candidates for political office—provided by the medium of television. The past four years have offered a televised parade of political information of every kind, from a multitude of sources never before open to the view of the average citizen. The number of persons privileged to participate in this unique form of political education increased six-fold in the four years. During this time, the television audience expanded from ten per cent of the homes in America, concentrated in the northeast part of the United States, to more than sixty-five per cent of the homes from coast-to-coast, in every state in the Union.

Today, no one, and legislators least of all, would deny the impact of television as a political and social force. The considerations which impelled Speaker Rayburn to ban broadcasting of House committee proceedings are eloquent testimony of the potency of television in its political context. But the very effectiveness of this new agency of political education is one of the major obstacles to the acceptance of the legislative broadcasting idea. Like atomic energy, the television medium has tremendous possibilities for good or for evil. Congress seems inclined to want to learn more about television and its effects before giving broadcasters a green light on unrestricted coverage of legislative sessions.

A fundamental question, however, is whether the Congressional policy of watchful waiting will not prove even more dangerous than
would an immediate decision to make every possible use of television for public information. Can Congress afford to risk losing the television-inspired public interest in government by tactics of delay? Even more important, can the American public permit the realization of "legislative extension" to go by default?

**Purpose and Plan of the Study**

Public discussion of televised hearings has exhibited a striking tendency to deal only with surface questions, avoiding the more elementary aspects of the controversy. The many inconsequential, often illogical, arguments advanced by proponents and opponents alike indicate a general lack of understanding of the role of public information in the political process. Many broadcasters, for example, consider the legislative broadcasting issue merely a technical question involving lights used by television and film cameramen. A significant number of Congressmen oppose television apparently on the sole ground that it detracts from the dignity of the proceedings. A few individuals have even argued that since television is predominantly an entertainment medium it has no place in legislative affairs. The extent to which various participants in the discussion persistently argue at cross-purposes offers ample evidence of widespread confusion and misunderstanding.

It is remarkable, in a sense, that in five years of impassioned debate no one has come forward with a concrete proposal or policy for Congressional broadcasting, nor attempted to analyze the basic issues
involved in the present controversy from an over-all point of view. Broadly conceived, then, the object of this study is to explore the fundamental aspects of the legislative broadcasting issue in a consistent fashion, attempting to relate television and government to political theory and practice.

The specific purpose

The primary objective of the study is to determine, as far as practicable, the role of Congressional broadcasting in a democratic society. More specifically, the purpose is to see how and to what extent this new form of political education may be utilized in the political process.

Admittedly, Congressional broadcasting is only one of many ways in which television may contribute to public information. The tremendous effect which televised hearings had upon public discussion of government, and the implications of the controversial broadcast ban, make it appropriate to limit the investigation to this one aspect of the process of political education.

It should be noted, also, that although the major concern is with television it is impossible to omit radio broadcasting from consideration. In spite of dissimilarities between the two in their technical aspects, both radio and television are generally included together in matters relating to broadcasting. Restrictions upon television coverage of legislative affairs likewise affect radio coverage. Throughout the study, therefore, television is the center of attention, but it is
assumed that a majority of the considerations under discussion will apply equally to radio broadcasting.

Significance of the study

To broadcasters the only issue involved in legislative broadcasting is their "right of access" on terms of equality with the press. They do not look past the simple fact that newspaper reporters attend public proceedings with the tools of their trade, viz., pad and pencil. Therefore, ask the broadcasters, why should they not be permitted to attend in the same fashion with the tools of their trade—microphone and television camera?

But the specious arguments advanced by broadcasters fail to get at the crux of the matter. Such reasoning limits the problem to that of legal determination, to be settled ultimately by the courts. In the last analysis, only a Supreme Court decision greatly broadening previous interpretations of the First Amendment to the Constitution can settle the question to the complete satisfaction of the broadcasting industry. Whether or not such a decision favoring broadcasting is likely, debate on legal or constitutional grounds relegates the matter to a private feud between broadcasters and the Congress, ignoring other vital considerations.

One question generally overlooked in the discussion of legislative broadcasting is why responsible leaders in a democratic nation will support restrictions against any medium of public information. Congressional opposition is understandable on selfish or procedural
grounds, depending upon the point of view. Less understandable is the not inconsiderable support given Congressional restrictions by responsible opinion leaders and students of government.

Laying the blame at the door of conservatism and reluctance to accept innovation is too simple an answer. For legislative broadcasting, as indicated in subsequent chapters, is nothing new in American political discussion. Proposals to broadcast proceedings of Congress date from the earliest years of radio. In each instance, Congressional opposition was firm and unyielding. Nor have recommendations for Congressional broadcasting fared much better at the hands of political or social scientists.

The continued reluctance of practical politicians and political theorists to give serious consideration to a possible means of furthering political education of the electorate seems strange in a nation dedicated to the principle of popular government by a fully informed public opinion, and founded on the premise that secrecy in government is indefensible. This seeming contradiction between principle and practice caused Representative Jacob K. Javits to insist that legislative broadcasting "represents a real test of faith in our system."

The Rayburn ban, therefore, and Congressional refusal to explore the potentialities of legislative broadcasting, assume an extraordinary

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significance. If these actions reflect a lack of faith in fundamental principles of democratic government, the legislative broadcasting issue becomes quite a different matter from the simple feud between broadcasters and government. If, on the other hand, there are inherent defects in proposals to publicize Congressional activities by means of television, does their existence necessarily justify complete rejection of the legislative broadcasting idea?

It is the author's contention that television can be invaluable in furthering democratic aims, and that its usefulness is endangered by two decisive factors: a prevailing climate of opinion antagonistic to the doctrine of an "informed public", and the failure of proponents of legislative broadcasting to offer any proposal which conforms to political realities.

Who can say what the future holds for democratic government in America if the newest medium of communication--television--is excluded from public bodies? The long-range effects of any contemporary decision are impossible to predict with any degree of accuracy. However, the long history of press freedom is marked by hard-fought battles over seemingly trivial issues. The trial of one Peter Zenger in New York in 1734 was not such as to arouse the public of that day to a spirited defense of freedom---yet it was the cornerstone of freedom of the press in America. By the same token the final decision on televising legislative proceedings may be a milestone in American political history.

The absence of a clearly-defined methodology of information and
public opinion in the American political process constitutes a major obstacle in determining the rightful role of any one agency of political information. At a time when democratic government is under fire, re-evaluation of basic concepts becomes all-important, as a means of strengthening democratic processes. No proposal which promises to further this end should go unexplored. Legislative broadcasting has been advocated as the nearest approach to the fulfillment of the democratic ideal since the New England town meeting. Therefore the real significance of this study is the insight it may give into the problem of political education in a democracy under the prevailing conditions and demands of modern government.

**Approach to the problem**

Since the study is directed to the ultimate usefulness of the medium of television in government, the first step is to examine the historical development of public information as a responsibility of government. Unavoidably, such analysis involves a number of debatable aspects of political theory and practice which influenced the historical role of information in the political process. Insofar as these subsidiary issues seem to have any significance in the ultimate decision regarding television as a medium of political education, they receive appropriate treatment in the study.

The second step is to evaluate the political contributions made by the broadcasting medium since its beginning, and the prevailing attitudes toward radio and television in furthering public information.
Third, the legislative broadcasting idea is analyzed from the standpoint of both practical political and technical aspects.

Finally, the study concludes with a proposal for Congressional broadcasting which attempts to meet the requirements of the existing political situation. Implicit throughout the investigation is the assumption that maximum public participation in the political process is still a valid democratic objective and that it is to this end that legislative broadcasting is directed.

Limitations of the study

The scope of the study is limited in several important respects. In the first place, discussion of legislative broadcasting is confined in these pages to the broadcasting or televising of actual proceedings or committee hearings of the two Houses of Congress. State and local legislative bodies differ in so many vital respects that it would be exceedingly difficult to reach any general conclusions applicable to a majority of jurisdictions, so no effort is made to consider legislative broadcasting in terms other than those affecting the federal legislative branch.

Furthermore, no brief is made in the study for opening all committee deliberations to public view. Legislative broadcasting refers only to the broadcasting of those committee hearings which are already open to the public. In this respect, the legislative broadcasting issue becomes something quite apart from the anti-secrecy crusade currently being waged by the press, even though the two subjects are
frequently linked. The press is more concerned with the problem of suppression of news at its source—with the desirability of legal access to news, on all levels of government. In the recently published authoritative work on freedom of information by one of the leading newspaper lawyers in America, Harold L. Cross, broadcasting received no mention whatsoever. While broadcasters undoubtedly have an important stake in the problem of legal access to news, legislative broadcasting enjoys no legal status whatsoever and broadcasters themselves lack the full enjoyment of the legal and extra-legal privileges and rights secured to the newspaper press by law and custom.

The study sketches all too briefly the historical highlights in the press-public-government relationship, chiefly to indicate the effect of changing conditions on attitudes toward information and toward politics. Owing to the necessity for keeping the investigation within reasonable bounds, at least one potentially significant avenue of investigation could not be explored as thoroughly as might have been desired. Fully a quarter century ago, Lippmann mentioned the fact that "the democratic ideal has never defined the function of the public". At the time he did not elaborate the point in any detail, nor did he use this approach in subsequent works on public opinion. Yet this omission from the political scheme assumes a growing importance as society places increased reliance upon the mass media of communication.


The history of American political thought and of mass communications in this country indicates a need for definitive study of the correlate functions of the public and of information in the political process. But this, obviously, was not properly or feasibly within the sphere of the present investigation.

Still another limitation upon the study of legislative broadcasting is the lack of empirical data dealing with the effectiveness of the television medium in communicating information. The medium itself is too new for any considerable volume of research to have been conducted, or research techniques to have been tested adequately. For the purposes of this study, it seemed sufficient to accept at face value the generalized contention that impact of television upon the public mind is far greater than that of any other medium of communication. Therefore, the justification for legislative broadcasting as an "important" adjunct of public information rests upon philosophical and rational grounds rather than upon substantiated, specific proofs of ultimate effectiveness.

**Special terminology**

To avoid unnecessary confusion, such terms as "public," "public opinion," "popular government", "rights", "politics", and similar expressions common to the political and social sciences, are used in their broadest sense, unless otherwise specified in the text. A few terms, however, require explanation.

The broadcasting idiom, or "trade talk," has *broadcasting* including
both radio broadcasting and televising or telecasting. **Broadcast** is used as a noun, a verb and an adjective, as is **telecast**, in the "trade press," and as they appear here. Wherever necessary to differentiate between radio and television, or when only one of the broadcast media is under discussion, the proper distinction will be made.

**Legislative broadcasting** includes any broadcast or telecast originating from a legislative chamber or committee room during the course of proceedings of the legislative body or committee. Such broadcasts may be either "live" (transmitted instantaneously) or "recorded" (which would include filming for television). They may be broadcasts of the entire proceedings, or edited versions (if recorded), but always the actual proceedings themselves—not news reports or commentaries dealing with such events. Courtroom broadcasts are not included. The terms "legislative broadcasting" and "Congressional broadcasting" will be used interchangeably throughout the study when referring to broadcasts from the floor of either House of Congress or of hearings of Congressional committees.

Radio and television constitute two of the **mass media of communication**. To the social scientist, interested in long-range effects of cultural institutions, the term "mass media" denotes all forms of public expression reaching large numbers of people in a society. To the journalist, concerned with immediacy in reporting news and events as they happen, the mass media include only those media which provide speedy transmission of ideas to the public at large—press, radio and
television. The factor of speed in transmitting information gives a special meaning to the mass media concept, differing to a considerable extent from that held by the social scientist. Since the study relates to the news and information aspects of broadcasting, the journalistic concept is more appropriate. The "mass media," therefore, refer here to radio, television and the "press"—essentially the daily newspapers and press services.

Public information is a conjunctive term appearing frequently in the literature of government, politics and journalism. Rarely is it dignified by definition. Often its meaning seems to vary with the particular circumstances being described by the writer at the time. Yet, as a postulate of an "informed public," public information requires special definitive treatment.

Depending on usage, public information possesses many subtle differences in meaning. In one sense, public information is the body of knowledge or facts or data possessed by all people. By this definition, it is information already generally known, having previously been made "public". A totally different interpretation relates to the moral responsibility of government to make available information regarding governmental actions, and the corollary obligation of the citizen to keep himself informed of the activities of his government. In this sense, public information becomes that body of knowledge necessary for the citizen of a democracy in making rational political decisions. It is this definition which appears to be used most frequently in the literature of politics.
In this study, however, public information is employed in still a different sense, more in keeping with its historical implications. The term is applied to the product or result of the process by which the government "informs" the public. Its meaning is more restricted than that of "political education", which includes a wider range of activities. Public information, as it appears in the following pages, incorporates the bipolar concepts: publicity of government and government "publicity" or public relations. Publicity of government, characteristically, is the traditional responsibility of the press as a means of popular control. Government publicity or public relations, on the other hand, is the positive concept of government's responsibility to explain its actions and the furtherance of political education of the electorate. In recent years, both publicity and public relations have become opprobrious terms, while public information has been widely substituted for both, thereby adding to the confusion in meaning. Throughout this report, therefore, care has been exercised to limit the use of the term public information to mean the general body of information and understanding of government that is both available and appropriate for the citizen to know—combining the two interpretations originally stated. Free access of public and press (including radio and television) to all desired information is inherent in this concept, as well as the active effort of government to publicize matters of public policy.

Sources of Data

An attempt to determine the role of legislative broadcasting in a
democratic society involves an exceedingly broad range of subject matter. While the literature of the various fields touched upon in the course of the investigation is extensive, there are relatively few reference materials which bear directly upon public information or upon legislative broadcasting. Standard works on political theory offer only incidental mention of the role of information in political processes. Broadcasting is almost wholly ignored. Political education is rarely discussed in either descriptive or philosophical textbooks on politics.

The investigation into legislative broadcasting, therefore, becomes a type of "literary detective" work; an attempt, first of all, to see where legislative broadcasts (and broadcasting in general) fit into the public information process, and second, to see how current concepts of public information developed. Most of the material in support of a "practical" program of legislative broadcasting is drawn from unrelated sources which have little direct bearing on public information or broadcasting.

Broadcasting history. Practically the only fruitful source of information on broadcasting in its political context is in the periodical press, especially in the so-called "trade papers" of the broadcasting industry. Broadcasting-Telecasting magazine is an excellent reference for industry viewpoints on the legislative broadcasting controversy. Files of The New York Times are an important source of news accounts of historic broadcasts, as well as fairly analytical "by-line" summaries of public attitudes toward legislative broadcasting. The Congressional Record, of course, is especially valuable for chronological
developments in relation to legislative broadcasting, and for opinions of individual Congressmen.

Information in the democratic process. The most complete commentary on the role of information in a democratic government is Bentham's eighteenth century Essay on Political Tactics, the second chapter of which outlines the theoretical basis for publicity in government. Nearly a hundred years passed before the subject of government publicity or government information again received attention to a degree comparable to Bentham's analysis—and this was in Wilson's Congressional Government. Bentham and Wilson were thus the first and most authoritative exponents of legislative responsibility for public information. Providing a striking contrast to this view are McConachie's Congressional Committees, Hall's Popular Government, and Lowell's Public Opinion and Popular Government. All three adopt a pessimistic tone regarding the efficacy of information in the political process, demonstrative of the skepticism arising in many quarters in the early part of the twentieth century.

In the 1930s a new contribution to the literature of public information appeared in James L. McCamy's outstanding treatise entitled Government Publicity. It remains the most authoritative and most frequently quoted work of its kind, describing in systematic fashion the means by which "big government" utilizes public relations as an agency of public administration, and the justification therefore. But McCamy's volume is of limited value in that it refers only to publicity by the administrative branch of the federal government, even though some of
his arguments might apply equally to the legislative branch.

The first real impetus toward a positive information policy on the part of Congress came at the end of World War II, as an incidental part of the general agitation for Congressional reorganization. Two volumes are especially noteworthy in this connection—Galloway's Congress at the Crossroads and Griffith's Congress: Its Contemporary Role. The authors, both distinguished students of legislative organization and long-time associates in the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress, recommend the adoption of a forthright public relations program by the two Houses of Congress as a necessary part of the legislative function. Griffith and Galloway each affirms the value of legislative broadcasting in principle, although without further amplification.

It is somewhat surprising that the literature of journalism offers so little on the relationship between information and democratic government. Most of the emphasis is upon freedom of the press and its significance, rather than upon the specific contributions of the press in its political context. The histories of journalism by Mott6 and Lee7 provide a valuable fund of data on the early relationship between the press and the federal government not available elsewhere. But in


general the academic disciplines most directly concerned with the agencies of communication of information contribute little to the role of information in the political process.

Public opinion and information. Most of the early works concerned with public opinion made only passing reference to the role of public information or omitted it entirely. Bryce's *The American Commonwealth* offers one of the earliest analyses of the actual functioning of public opinion in the political process. Twentieth century authorities seem to have concerned themselves primarily with the means of engineering consent of the electorate or of bringing public opinion to bear upon government, instead of examining the processes by which the electorate becomes informed and forms opinions. Albig's *Public Opinion* and certain works of Lippmann and Lasswell do provide some useful material bearing directly on public information. More significant for the purposes of the present study are critical evaluations of the present state of public information, such as the analyses of public opinion on foreign policy by Bailey and Smith. In general, the literature of public opinion is exceedingly pessimistic as to the future outlook for a better informed public, without evaluating information processes or alternatives.

Government documents. Congressional publicity has never received


much official study, but legislative broadcasting has been considered at least incidentally in three separate Congressional investigations since 1945. Two of the investigations were concerned with recommendations for Congressional reorganization. The third and most recent was limited to the question of revising Congressional committee procedures. The chief value of the published hearings, as far as the Congressional broadcasting issue is concerned, lies in the variety of opinions expressed with respect to the problem and the general direction taken by the testimony as a whole.

Other sources of material. Some of the more significant sources of information on specific points covered in the study deserve separate mention. Cooley's *Constitutional Limitations* and Luce's *Legislative Procedure* are the two most authoritative works for interpreting the rule-making power of Congress in governing its own proceedings. The nature of the rule-making power in relation to legislative reporting and the rights and privileges of the press are well defined in Thayer's *Legal Control of the Press*, which includes one of the most complete accounts of the history of legislative reporting anywhere available.

Of course, there have been innumerable articles on various aspects of the legislative broadcasting question in national periodicals and in certain professional journals. The subject has recently received considerable attention in a number of law journals. On the whole, however, few of the articles appearing in such publications prove sufficiently noteworthy to be singled out. One of the few is that of Berelson in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, "Democratic Theory and Public
Opinion"—the first effort of its kind encountered in the course of this investigation, although the article, like most of the other literature in the public opinion field, fails to give consideration to the information process or the role of the mass media.

PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

Only one researcher is known to have done any investigating into the effects of legislative broadcasts. Gerhart Wiebe, research psychologist for CES Radio and Lecturer in Psychology at The City College of New York, has published two admittedly inconclusive studies based upon the Kefauver hearings.11 Morton's Mass Persuasion analyzes the use of radio in a particular information campaign, but provides nothing directly applicable to the generalized concept of broadcasting and public information.

The voluminous research relating to broadcasting is limited almost exclusively to quantitative measurements of audience size, with nothing at all of a qualitative nature related to political processes. There have been notable contributions in social science and educational research from which inferences might be drawn regarding television's information potential. But nothing has been done at this writing


which goes beyond the inference stage. Definitive studies on public information, and broadcasting in particular, are practically non-existent. The contributions of public opinion research tend to be more confusing than helpful in the absence of any clearly-defined and generally accepted agreement by political scientists as to the role of public information in the political process. The introduction of television into the political scene aggravates the situation by adding still another unknown quantity, without any appreciable increase in understanding of the processes by which the public becomes "informed".

Professor Leiserson of Vanderbilt University summed up the situation admirably in an article published in the American Political Science Review in 1953.¹² Noting that the role of public opinion "is more often justified than explained" by political theorists, Leiserson charged that the Lasswellian concept of political opinion as the mere tool of leadership provides an inadequate and inaccurate picture of the relationship between public opinion and public policy. At the root of the problem, in Leiserson's opinion, is the common failure to view the mass media as political entities in themselves, possessing "historic organizational, overlapping functional relationship with other centers of influence in society." Previous analyses of the political role of the mass media, he said, have been limited to the constitutional position of the media, ignoring its institutional

character. In the future, it will become more important to study "the policy questions involved in the operating relationships between the media and the political and administrative agencies of government." The fundamental questions to be resolved, according to Leiserson, are these:

1. How shall the mass media permit themselves to be utilized by government in return for improved access to news and a recognition of governmental responsibility for advising and shaping public opinion, as well as informing the public?

2. How should the representatives of the mass media secure access to information sources without losing their independence or lessening their responsibility to the public?

3. To what extent should responsibility be delegated to the mass media for official public information programs?

4. Under what conditions may joint relationships be established between the mass media and governmental organs in the formulation of policy?

These are questions which extend far beyond the purview of this study, but the findings with respect to legislative broadcasting should prove useful in appraising the overall relationship between government and the information agencies, and may stimulate further research along similar lines. To the extent that this study may provide a better insight into the need for an understanding of the institutional aspects of television in the political process, it will have served its purpose.
CHAPTER II

GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION IN AMERICA

The "philosophy" of public information in America can best be summed up by these words of George Washington, uttered at the close of his political career: "In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion be enlightened."¹ The history of American politics bears out the truth of this statement. As popular control over the machinery of government increased, so did the flow of information. Each was the complement of the other in the political process; neither outstripped the other for long.

While history records the political development of the American nation in the minutest detail, the parallel development of the agencies of communication ordinarily is given scant attention. Yet the inter-relationship between information and politics was considered by Bryce as even more remarkable than the phenomenon of "government by public opinion", as he described the American system of government. "It is chiefly the faith in publicity that gives to the American public their peculiar buoyancy," Bryce stated, adding that the real power of popular government in America lay in the "practice of freely and constantly reading, talking, and judging public affairs with a view to

voting thereon, rather than the mere possession of political rights.  

To appreciate fully the tremendous vitality of the information process throughout American history, it is necessary to look back upon the America of the eighteenth century, before the Revolutionary War. Public information, in the sense of government communicating with its citizens, was virtually non-existent in colonial America, if for no other reason than that the "public" itself had an indeterminate political position. Not until after the American Revolution did the people as a whole figure prominently in the political process. In colonial America, according to Thomas Cooley, "even the laws were not at first published for general circulation" on the assumption that by "keeping the people in ignorance of the precise boundary between what was lawful and that which was prohibited," citizens would take greater care to "avoid all doubtful actions."  

And there were other indications of a strong aversion on the part of colonial authorities toward public information. Even up to the outbreak of the Revolution, there were officials who agreed in substance with Sir William Berkeley, a governor of Virginia of the preceding century. Berkeley bitterly opposed public education and the press, "for learning has brought disobedience and heresy" into the world, while "printing has divulged them and libels against the


government. It was Berkeley's hope that America might be spared the twin evils of public schools and printing for at least a hundred years. His wish prevailed, for even in 1770 public schools were still far in America's future, and the press consisted of 37 newspapers, none with a circulation of more than a few hundred. Mott estimates that possibly five per cent of the white families in the colonies prior to the Revolution received a newspaper weekly.

During most of the colonial period, neither colonial governors nor legislative assemblies recognized any particular necessity to inform the common man, much less a governmental obligation to do so. Official proclamations and notices were printed at intervals, it is true, but only under specific authorization of the governing officials. In general, discussion of political affairs by the public at large, or comments in the public press, were discouraged vigorously by those in authority. The propensity of colonial editors to criticize the government tended to support the contention that printing "libels against the government" was the only function of the press. Such criticism evoked more than 70 libel suits and 40 convictions, in accordance with the English common law doctrine that publication of anything against the government would incite the people to revolt.


6 Cooley, op. cit., p. 612.
Even though they purported to represent the public, colonial legislators were no less sensitive to criticism than were other officials. In Massachusetts, for example, the House of Representatives in one instance had offending printers imprisoned for implying that the government had failed to take action against coastal pirates, and in another, for lampooning members of the House. Suspicion and distrust of the press undoubtedly prejudiced the attitudes of legislators against public information. The idea of using the press to inform the general public evidently never occurred to the elected representatives of the people in colonial Massachusetts, for there were no newspaper accounts of legislative debates or proceedings until after the break with England.  

But distrust of the press alone does not offer an altogether complete interpretation of the question of public information in the colonial period. As Pollard and other historians have stated, "government was not yet the affair of the people."  

Charles and Mary Beard estimate that one-half to two-thirds of the adult males in the colonies did not vote, even in Massachusetts where interest in politics was high.  

Suffrage was restricted by property and religious


requirements in practically every colony. Laborers, not being property owners, were excluded from the vote. The frontier communities received less than a proportionate representation in colonial legislatures, while the older, more conservative seaboard districts completely dominated political affairs until long after the Revolution. Political leadership was securely in the hands of the men of substance, and the distinction between the "gentle folk" and "simple men" was clear-cut throughout the colonies. The "simple men", even if they enjoyed the privilege of voting, were forced to defer to the judgment of their "betters" on all questions of public policy. In this sense, therefore, a truly "public" opinion did not exist, unless the "public" is limited to those who were permitted to participate in the political process.

Significance of information control

The English editor and critic, Scott-James, described the essential interrelationship between information and political power in The Influence of the Press, written early in the present century. He held the opinion that political development of the peoples of the world could best be analyzed in terms of dissemination of knowledge. The larger the society, the easier it became for the rulers to control the situation by superior knowledge and control over the machinery of information. According to Scott-James, news or information "is the only basis upon which opinion can be formed"—where there is no information there is no "public opinion"; where there is no opinion, conversely,
there is no demand for information.10

The Scott-James' interpretation of history not only applies to the colonial political situation but conforms admirably to current theories of public opinion. It is questionable whether colonial rulers had a sufficient grasp of the dynamics of public opinion or the importance of information in the political process to have made a deliberate effort to restrict public information. However, the fact remains that colonial legislatures, to a large degree, had control of the machinery of government and a less formal, but equally effective, control over information.

Education was available only to the wealthier members of colonial aristocracy. From this group—the merchant classes of the North and the landed gentry of the South—came the legislators who served in the colonial assemblies. These were the "educated" classes who composed the vast majority of newspaper subscribers and the readers of the published works of continental political philosophers. The prevalent illiteracy of the common people, geographical limitations upon communication and transportation, and lack of any official interest in public information, combined to limit the development of a politically effective or articulate public opinion. It is little wonder that Hamilton, arguing for the adoption of the Constitution in The Federalist, was impatient with democratic expressions of the need for an enlightened

public opinion. The average man, thought Hamilton, would always get his information from "intelligent men" who would be in contact with each other, would read the public papers, and correspond with their representatives. Despite the extensive influence of the writings of Locke, Montesquieu and Rousseau among the "educated men" who composed the provincial ruling class, the idea that ordinary men would be capable of reading and judging for themselves seemed obviously impractical under the conditions then existing in the colonies.

The concentration of knowledge and political power in the hands of the "educated men" of the time was of considerable significance in determining the course of subsequent political development and the role of public information in the early years of the Republic. The intellectual aristocracy controlled affairs before the Revolution, supplied the leadership for the Revolutionary movement, and retained its power substantially undiminished until the Jacksonian era. Men of this class saw themselves as the "natural" aristocracy best qualified, as even Jefferson agreed, "for the instruction, the trusts, and government of society." Nor did there seem anything inconsistent in espousing the creed of democratic rule, while still insisting that the "ignorant and the dependent" could never be entrusted with the "public interest."


13 Gouverneur Morris, quoted in Pollard, op. cit., p. 67.
Such intellectual snobbery had far-reaching influence in later years in stimulating public interest in education and information.

There was still another important aspect of government by "intelligent men". The American Revolution itself took on a special character, not common to conventional rebellion against authority. Usually revolutionists operate outside the law, seeking to overthrow the government and seize control for themselves. In America, the revolutionaries were already in control of the lower house of the assemblies, not to mention more than 700 town governments and the colonial courts as well. The American Revolution came from within the government itself, carried on through regularly-established legal channels. The result was that the revolutionary propaganda could be disseminated under the guise of official information—and the first public information program in America was born. The effectiveness of propaganda originating within duly-elected representative assemblies was immeasurable, but undeniable in view of the success of the revolutionary effort.14

The Revolutionary propaganda campaign

The first experience that most Americans had with public information was the propaganda disseminated by provincial governments in opposition to the restrictive imperial policies of the mother country. From 1765 until 1774, the colonial assemblies adopted resolutions, prepared memorials, addresses and petitions, presumably directed to the British

Government, but carefully and widely disseminated throughout the colonies. The propaganda effort, both official and unofficial, left no stone unturned and organized every agency of communication in the common cause. After generations of colonial rule under which neither public opinion nor public information played an active part, the mobilization of opinion in support of revolution becomes truly remarkable. Dissension between the individual colonies, between the inhabitants of the frontier and the coastal population, between members of religious sects offered little indication that the scattered million or so Americans could unite for any common purpose. The situation was further complicated by the lack of adequate communications between the various communities, or even between colonial governments.

The first step in the public information process, therefore, was to establish committees of correspondence to maintain contact with other similar committees throughout the country. Each of the provincial assemblies appointed such committees, and so did several hundred town governments. By August, 1774, the entire country was blanketed by the committee organization and the political propaganda machine was in motion. Davidson comments that the committee system unified the protests of towns and colonies and stimulated public opinion against British legislation, thus constituting the most important organization for the dissemination of propaganda created during the pre-Revolutionary period from 1763 to 1776.15

15 Ibid., Chapter III, pp. 48-62.
Every conceivable means of disseminating revolutionary doctrines was utilized: plays, demonstrations, songs, sermons, public meetings, public addresses, personal contacts, pamphlets, broadsides, almanacs, magazines and newspapers. In spite of the limitations of the use of printed propaganda in a society in which more than half of the people could not read, the pamphlet quickly became the accepted medium for unifying the thinking of the intellectual members of society, while the newspaper was depended upon as the primary means of reaching the average reading public. The basic elements of American political thought, the constitutional arguments, and the more substantial treatises by Jefferson, Hamilton, and other outstanding intellectuals, first appeared in pamphlet form. 16

But the most effective organ for the dissemination of revolutionary propaganda was the newspaper, although colonial editors did not take the initiative in this regard. Rather than active leadership, most editors before 1765 exercised a passive role in following the lead of local authorities and local opinion. The decade from 1765 to 1775 was marked by a radical change in the content of newspapers. Prior to this time, only foreign news was printed to any great extent. People were not too interested in the events occurring in other colonies, and intercolonial news was too difficult to get. But after 1763, public interest in colonial affairs increased to the point where editors were sorely taxed to keep pace with the demand. An

improved postal service increased the efficiency of newspaper reporting, and made possible extensive reprinting of materials from other papers. In addition to ordinary news, newspaper columns contained numerous letters to the editor, private letters, and political essays—generally published because of their propaganda or public information value.  

The volume of news increased with the approach of war. By 1774, papers were beginning to print all the news they could get—"town and country resolutions, both local and domestic, assembly activities, the formation of new agencies of government, and the events in Massachusetts." From 1775 on, war news crowded the political essays from the papers.

Public appetite for news and information stimulated the circulation of the leading papers to unbelievable proportions. The New-York Gazetteer claimed a circulation of 3,600 in 1774 and the Massachusetts Spy reached 3,500 the following year. The circulation of the Hartford Connecticut Courant is reputed to have built to a record 8,000 in 1778. Thomas Paine's Common Sense, which as a pamphlet sold 120,000 copies in three months and was probably read by most of the literate men in America within a year following its publication, ran serially in several newspapers.

17 Ibid., pp. 235-45.
18 Ibid., p. 237.
The "propaganda decade" just prior to the Revolution was the scene of the most extensive program of political education the world had ever known, and the press assumed a preeminent role in the minds of public and politician alike as a necessary adjunct to the political development of the people.

**Government propaganda in the Revolutionary era**

From a general policy of limited information prior to 1765, colonial assemblies went to the opposite extreme, passing resolutions and drafting memorials with publication a primary concern. All were published in the local papers; many were reprinted in other colonies as well. 20

With the outbreak of war, the propaganda campaign lost momentum. The provincial assemblies, now reorganized as "congresses", reduced their output of public information. The Continental Congress, which included many of the ablest of the colonial propagandists of the earlier period, soon replaced the provincial governments as the most important political agency for the dissemination of information to the public. Congress commonly ordered the publication of its notable addresses in the form of handbills, sending these in bundles to the state governors for distribution. In 1778, the congressional statement issued to counteract the effect of the British peace proposals was ordered read from every pulpit in the nation. 21

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20 Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

It was in the Continental Congress that the first indication of a governmental obligation to inform the public came to light. Proceedings of the Congress subsequent to April 8, 1777, were published from time to time in the public press, while on November 15, 1777, Congress authorized the publication of a journal of its proceedings on a monthly basis, subject only to the restriction that treaties, alliances, or military operations might be kept secret if deemed necessary. In May, 1777, Congress considered the draft of an address "to the inhabitants of the United States," the opening statement of which is a concrete expression of congressional responsibility for public information:

In free States an unreserved Communication of Sentiments, as well as an Union of Interests, should always subsist between those who direct, and those who delegate to them the Direction of public Affairs. That your Interests and ours are inseparable is a Truth of which we are clearly convinced; and our Conduct is, we trust an uniform Testimony of this clear Conviction. We wish that, upon every Occasion, you may have the fullest and most perfect Views of the Situation in which you stand; but we look upon it as peculiarly our Duty, at this Time when a new Campaign is opening, to address you upon some important Subjects, with which your Freedom and Happiness are very intimately connected.

And written in the margin of the original draft is this comment: "Congress ought not to suppose a necessity for Expressing this. It ought not to appear that the Negative of it could ever suggest itself to Congress."

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24 Loc. cit.
But even such overt avowals of governmental responsibility cannot be taken too literally as reflecting the recognition of a public "right" to full and free information. This was a "war" Congress, and its public utterances were designed not only to inform, but to persuade. Samuel Adams even suggested that Congress issue a publication of its own to counteract Tory propaganda by fixing in the minds of the people "the first Impressions in favor of Truth."25 The Continental Congress felt obliged to inform the public in furtherance of the war effort, but accorded neither public nor press the privilege of self-information. All sessions of the Congress were held behind closed doors, in secret, from 1774 to 1781 when the Articles of Confederation went into effect. The names of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were withheld for six months for fear of prosecution for treason.26 Similar motivation probably accounted for the congressional policy of secrecy, coupled with the fact that the country was at war with enemy troops not too far distant and Tory sympathizers everywhere. But the conclusion is inescapable that the first national legislative body established a precedent for secrecy and exclusion of the press and public from its deliberations.

Effects of Revolutionary propaganda

The "propaganda" decade, from 1765 to 1775, was in many ways one


26 Thayer, op. cit., p. 33.
of the most notable periods in American history. During this period, the American people were, for the first time, admitted to that full measure of representation previously denied them. The grass-roots organization of the committees for correspondence stimulated local political discussion and the development of a truly "public" opinion on national issues. The Revolutionary propaganda machinery, in a few short years, gave to the people the fundamentals of a political education—something altogether lacking in the colonial environment. In so doing, the intellectual aristocracy succeeded almost too well, and nearly lost control of the political machinery. Schlesinger points out that

the great tidewater leaders and pamphleteers, seeking to place the controversy with the mother country on a dignified philosophical plane, unintentionally aroused the plain people to a high degree of excitement and self-assertion, through their constant employment of such expressions as "the natural rights of men" and "no taxation without representation." 27

The mechanics and laborers in the towns, although legally ineligible to vote, became politically conscious and insisted on taking part in the mass meetings and conventions on equal terms with the well-to-do. The frontier communities were invited to participate in popular conventions and provincial meetings of the eastern seaboard, and received the full measure of representation in colonial affairs so long denied them. Greater participation in public affairs, and more public discussion of politics, instilled in the average man a new sense of political "rights" which he was unwilling to surrender. Fisher Ames,

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the leading representative of the New England aristocracy, summarized the situation as follows: "The people have turned against their teachers the doctrines which were inculcated in order to effect the late revolution."28

The second public information campaign: adopting a Constitution

The eight years of government under the Articles of Confederation, following the Revolution, have been termed the "critical period". The country was nearly bankrupt. The excessive optimism of the Revolutionary era had almost disappeared in the wake of economic and social upheavals. A debtors' rebellion in Massachusetts threatened to spread to other states. Everywhere, political lines were drawn between the debtor and creditor classes, with debtors demanding paper money for the payment of their taxes and other obligations, moratorium on debts and, in some instances, even the abolition of taxes. Conservative leaders saw political control wrested from them as the debtor factions were swept triumphantly into power in seven state legislatures in the election of 1786.

Schlesinger states that "no events could have better demonstrated to the satisfaction of the aristocracy the incapacity of the masses for self-government; and with a seal animated by despair, it turned every energy to recovering its lost ascendancy in public affairs."29


29 Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 80.
Even ardent believers in the rights of man and Rationalist democracy were sadly disillusioned. John Jay was forced to the conclusion in 1786 that "the mass of men are neither wise nor good." Washington admitted "we probably had too good an opinion of human nature," and, on a later occasion, observed pessimistically that "mankind, when left to themselves are unfit for their own government."^{31}

To bolster the tottering and enfeebled national government, Congress called an assembly to revise the Articles of Confederation. Fifty-five delegates assembled at Philadelphia in May 1787 determined to halt the trend toward anarchy. They were men of distinction in their home states, experienced in political affairs, and conservative in their political outlook. Quite cognizant of the difficulties confronting them in reaching any kind of common agreement, the delegates immediately resolved to keep their proceedings entirely secret, to keep no official record, and to take every precaution to prevent premature disclosure of their deliberations.\(^{32}\)

After four months, in which even members of the Continental Congress

\(^{30}\) Pollard, op. cit., p. 63.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 63.

\(^{32}\) Bryce approved the policy of secrecy at the convention "for criticism from without might have imperilled a work which seemed repeatedly on the point of breaking down, so great were the difficulties encountered from the divergent sentiments and interests of different parts of the country." The records of the Convention were left in the keeping of the chairman, Washington, who turned them over to the State Department in 1796. They were not published until 1819.—Bryce, op. cit., I, 22-23.
were excluded from the debates of the assembly, the convention delegates brought forth an entirely new creation: a Constitution for the United States. The document outlined a national government with sweeping powers, reducing the autonomy of the states and keeping popular control of legislation to a minimum. An elaborate system of checks and balances was to act as a restraint upon usurpation of power by any one of the three branches of the new government, and popular representation was limited to the direct election of but one of the two houses of the legislative branch. The founding fathers sought to offset the "tyranny of the majority" then much in evidence in the state legislatures, and accordingly, says Killspaugh, "did not intend . . . that the national government should be controlled by or be responsible to the people."33

But it was one thing to draft such a document and another to secure the acceptance of its sweeping provisions by the country at large. The convention delegates recognized the impossibility of getting unanimous approval of the state legislatures, which technically had the sole authority to approve such changes. The members of the Constitutional Convention therefore by-passed the existing machinery of government and specified in the Constitution itself the method of ratification—by means of special constitutional conventions convened for the single purpose of ratification.34


Congress accepted the recommendations of the convention, submitting the Constitution to the states whose legislatures were to call the ratifying conventions. As soon as the details of the proposed instrument were made public the entire nation was plunged into acrimonious debate on a scale reminiscent of the Revolutionary period. From November, 1787, to July, 1788, the ratification question was the subject of a nationwide propaganda campaign. The enemies of ratification were poorly organized, but numerically powerful. Had universal suffrage prevailed at the time, Odegard and Helms point out, ratification, in all probability would have failed.\(^{35}\) As it was, four states---New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York and Virginia---elected assemblies either opposed to ratification or so evenly divided that the issue was in doubt. North Carolina voted against ratification in its convention; Rhode Island's legislature refused even to call a convention---as a result neither state participated in the first presidential election.

The friends of the Constitution included in their number the merchants and landed aristocracy---Hamilton's "intelligent men"---who had become accustomed to the privilege of political leadership and who possessed extensive political experience and acumen. By political stratagem and propaganda, the advocates of ratification set out to secure the adoption of the Constitution. New York, in particular, became the


\(^{36}\) Schlesinger, *op. cit.*, pp. 197-98.
target of Federalist propaganda. Without New York, the federal union would be cut in half. The port of New York was of immeasurable importance to the national economy. More immediately important, New York alone of all the states made a temporary exception to its suffrage restrictions and allowed all male adults to vote—presumably weighing the scales against ratification. To win New York for the federal cause became the task of Hamilton, Madison and Jay. These three collaborated in the preparation of a series of essays, which, published as The Federalist, stand today as among the finest expressions of constitutionalism and its alternatives.

The full text of the Constitution had been published for the first time in two New York City newspapers, the weekly Packet, and the Daily Advertiser. Before the public debate developed to significant proportions, the first of the eighty-five Federalist essays appeared in print, published originally in three papers in New York City, and quickly reprinted in other papers throughout the nation "to provide foundation for intelligent understanding." 37

Evaluation of the campaign

The debate over ratification differs in many respects from the dramatic mobilization of opinion which characterized the Revolutionary propaganda campaign. The discussion itself required little stimulation. Unlike the Revolutionary "public information" program, ratification "propaganda" efforts did not originate in the governmental organization,

although most of the advocates and their opponents were recognized political leaders. Whereas Revolutionary propaganda was designed to arouse the masses of the people to action, to create a public opinion, the Federalists sought only to influence the electorate—the two men in three eligible to vote. Public opinion was already much in evidence, and generally unfavorable to the cause of ratification in view of the limitations upon popular control imposed by the Constitution. The Federalist spokesmen, then, had to debate on intellectual rather than emotional grounds, directing their efforts toward the thinking men, men of substance, who had, nevertheless, taken little interest in the internal politics of their states. The issue of adoption fully aroused the press and "the country's newspapers became not only carriers of public opinions but the only vehicles for concerted, organized propaganda for or against ratification and adoption of this yet untried form of government."38 Although the press undoubtedly exerted much influence, exclusive reliance upon the press further limited the circumference of the discussion, since many towns still had no papers and most of rural America was out of range of newspaper circulation. But, aside from the initial contest over the election of delegates to the state conventions, ratification of the Constitution was not a matter for public opinion to determine, except indirectly. Pollard places some emphasis upon the estimate that no more than five percent of the population voted for or against the Constitution.39

38 Bartow, loc. cit.
39 Pollard, op. cit., p. 77.
The real battle was won in the state conventions by the political maneuvering and weight of personality of the astute Federalist leaders.

The third campaign: political education for nationalism

The Federalists had undisputed control of every branch of the new government created under the Constitution, and the aristocratic conception of a government of wealth and intelligence seemed assured once again. But the existence of a mere scrap of paper did not automatically create a nation. The road ahead was long and difficult; there were few precedents to guide the new government on its way. Administrative machinery had to be devised, a court system established, state-federal relations worked out. The critical economic conditions which had nearly dissolved the Confederation required immediate attention. The exceedingly slim margin by which ratification had been won made it impossible to ignore the strength of opposition to federalism and a strong central government. Above all, the majority of the people had no knowledge or comprehension of the problems and issues involved in building a nation, yet the understanding, patience and cooperation of the electorate was a matter of practical necessity for the success of the new venture.

Public apathy toward the formation of a federal government was indicated by the lack of any widespread interest in the election of the new national legislators. Senators and presidential electors were chosen by the state legislatures almost as a matter of course. Representatives, as a rule, "were returned by a handful of voters." In at least two states, only a sixth of the eligible voters went to the
When the day arrived for the members of the new Congress to assemble in New York and count the votes of the electoral college, only eight of the twenty-two Senators and thirteen of the fifty-nine Representatives were on hand. For more than a month the country went about its business without a government, while Congress waited until it had a quorum, with members drifting in by ones and twos.

The first public information program involving the national government (and the third in American history) was largely unplanned—unlike the two earlier "propaganda" campaigns. As a formal program, it developed from two sets of conditions: the necessity for public printing, and the beginnings of partisan politics.

There was no official printing establishment in 1789 (the present United States Government Printing Office was not created until 1860). Following the practice of colonial assemblies, the federal government appointed a "public" printer, giving him contracts for government printing—a practice which prevails even today in many state governments. Such printing included the publication of new laws, proceedings


41 Both Houses met daily, formally announced the absence of a quorum and adjourned. At the end of the first week, the Senators present wrote their absent colleagues reminding them that a new nation had been established and suggested they had a duty regarding it. The notice was disregarded. A second and more urgent message sent to the eight absentees closest to New York brought in three Senators, including two from New Jersey just across the river. The House secured a quorum after nearly a month; it took the Senate an extra week to get the necessary twelve Senators for a quorum. Ernest Sutherland Bates, *The Story of Congress, 1789-1935* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), pp. 1-3.
of Congress, and legal advertisements, in the main, with an occasional special report, text of a treaty, proclamation or other official document.

To a considerable degree, government printing contracts were the financial mainstay of the first newspapers in America. Few papers carried much advertising, and revenue from subscriptions was both limited and unreliable. The availability of a government printing contract determined the establishment and continued existence of many early papers. Dependence upon government patronage operated to keep the number of papers at a minimum, since only one paper was necessary to serve the needs of government in any one area.

With the establishment of a national government, "official" printing assumed a new importance. The success of earlier propaganda campaigns in the Revolutionary period and in the fight for constitutional ratification demonstrated the political value of large-scale public information. The Federalists had learned well the lesson of publicity and being astute, practical politicians, made government printing an effective part of the federal patronage system. Printing contracts were issued first as a reward for services rendered, later as an outright bribe for party support. Once rewarded by government contracts, newspapers could then be kept in line by threats to cancel the official "advertising". In theory, each department of the government selected its own printer, with the President and executive department supporting one, the House of Representatives another, and the Senate still another, and so on. In practice, the President carried
enormous weight in the selection process, and could almost overnight put an end to a contract with a newspaper which presumed to criticize the administration.42

The historical record is not too clear as to how open subsidization of the press came into being. The "official" propaganda of the colonial assemblies and the Continental Congress in the Revolutionary period was apparently published without compensation. The Confederation Congress paid for publication of its proceedings and other official notices in local papers, but there is no evidence that the Congress authorized any "advertising" in papers outside the seat of government, Philadelphia. During the ratification controversy in 1788-89, the propaganda bombardment was conducted by individuals, not by government. If any charge was made for the publication of the Federalist essays in the New-York Packett, for example, it was made as a contribution by the authors, or "friends of ratification", not by a branch of government. Ordinarily, until 1790, printing contracts were given out to local printers at the seat of government only. But, during the first session of the federal Congress, a Massachusetts editor offered to publish all new laws and other legal advertisements without pay, since he knew the United States was nearly bankrupt at that time. He later received a check for seven thousand dollars to cover the cost of this official "advertising".43

42 Mott, op. cit., p. 256.
From this rather innocuous beginning, government patronage was expanded and strengthened with each succeeding administration, exerting a "tremendous influence" in molding American newspapers for nearly half a century.\(^44\) How much government subsidies were viewed simply as a means of insuring dissemination of public information, and how much they were originally conceived as political tools of the administration is, of course, impossible to determine. Jefferson had an unwavering faith in public information, and while he recognized the more obvious limitations of public opinion he was firmly convinced that the good sense of the people would ultimately prevail. Writing to Edward Carrington in 1787, Jefferson contended that the only way to prevent the "errors" of popular government was to give the people "full information of their affairs thru the channel of the public papers, & to contrive that those papers should penetrate the whole mass of the people." The important thing, in Jefferson's opinion, was to keep alive the attention of the people, for "once they become inattentive to the public affairs," he asserted, "you & I, & Congress and Assemblies, judges & governors shall all become wolves."\(^45\)

However altruistic his motives, it was Jefferson who gave the greatest impetus to government subsidization of the press. While still only a candidate for the presidency, he induced a Philadelphia editor to move from Philadelphia to the new capital, Washington, promising that

\(^44\) Lee, op. cit., p. 223.

the new paper he would establish there would serve as the official
organ of the administration. The National Intelligencer, a triweekly
which first appeared on October 31, 1800, was the result. True to his
promise, Jefferson made it the official voice of the executive branch
of the federal government. Owing to political differences between
Jefferson and the House of Representatives, the editor of the Intelligencer was denied access to that chamber, initially. By the second
session, however, the administration editor became a semiofficial re­
porter and his record of Congressional debates was the only one made
for the next several years.46

The official status of the Intelligencer made it the leading source
of governmental news, and for a quarter-century other American newspapers depended on the Intelligencer for their reports of Congressional activ­
ities. During this period, from 1800 to 1825, it was only a four-page
paper, with two pages devoted to advertising and one page to Congression­
al proceedings or editorial matter.47

The Intelligencer became a daily paper in 1813 and remained the pres­
idential mouthpiece and printer for Congress until 1829, when Andrew Jack­
son was inaugurated as president and it was superseded by papers sub­
sidized by Jackson and his political supporters. The Intelligencer
regained its official status briefly under Harrison and Tyler, and later
under Fillmore, by which time direct government subsidization of news-

46 Mott, op. cit., p. 177.
47 Loc. cit.
papers had become unnecessary and of doubtful value.\textsuperscript{48}

Andrew Jackson had his "official" organ, first in the \textit{United States Telegraph}, and later in the \textit{Washington Globe}, which was set up in 1830 and endowed with government printing to the extent of $50,000 a year. Jackson, according to Nott, was no great believer in the abstract principles of freedom of the press. He used the press in a thoroughly practical, uninhibited manner, so as to give him and his political principles the greatest possible advantage. He was accused of "suborning" the press through appointments to political jobs, and the \textit{National Intelligencer}, in 1832, published a list of fifty-seven journalists who had received federal jobs from Jackson.\textsuperscript{49}

President Tyler likewise recognized the political advantages of government publicity and set up his own newspaper in Washington, with others in practically every state—all supported by government patronage. In spite of such extensive efforts, he lost the next election to Polk. And during Polk's administration, government subsidies to the press were abandoned. Government printing contracts were let to the lowest bidder and were no longer used as political rewards for loyal and deserving editors.\textsuperscript{50}

Whatever merits such subsidies of the press may have had in the

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 178.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., pp. 179-80.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 356.
early years of the Republic as a policy of government, subsidies invited corruption. Lee points out that bribes for party support were fairly numerous during the early part of the nineteenth century, and criticism of any department of the government was exceedingly dangerous. Henry Clay asserted that the three subsidized party organs in Washington in 1841 were receiving a total of $420,000, primarily for printing the reports of Congress. They not only received the government patronage in paid "advertising", but received preferential treatment in access to news sources as well. As a result of having his reporters excluded from Congress to favor the Washington papers, James Gordon Bennett of the New York Herald took up cudgels in defense of freedom of the press. By offering to publish daily reports of the Senate without any payment whatever, Bennett effectively put an end to the patronage system and favoritism to the local Washington papers. After 1841, the press became politically independent of the federal government, thus ending governmental efforts at political and partisan education of the public.51

The success of the public information program

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to assess correctly the effect of press subsidies upon public information in the early 1800s. If government subsidies had been the only factor determining the volume and nature of public information, the development of popular government in America might have taken a different course. But the "party press"

of the early years was not limited to government-subsidized papers. Practically every political faction started a newspaper of its own, following the dictum of Thomas Jefferson that "the press is the best instrument for enlightening the mind of man." Opposition papers sprang up to counter the arguments of the party in power, and political parties and the press became almost natural complements of each other. In these first fifty years of national history, interest in national politics and political discussion enjoyed a popularity never since achieved. The extent of political information among average Americans was a source of amazement to foreign visitors to the United States. "What is most worthy of admiration in the history of America," wrote Fanny Wright in 1820, "is not merely the spirit of liberty which has ever animated her people, but their perfect acquaintance with the science of government." In 1837 the French traveler and author Chevalier commented: "In political affairs, the American multitude has reached a much higher degree of initiation than the European mass." During the era of the "party press"—with newspapers endowed by government and political party subsidies—the American public became animated by a spirit of nationalism and political awareness even in remotest frontier areas. Between 1790 and 1830, the United States


changed from a nation of four million persons concentrated along a thin strip of land bordering the Atlantic Ocean to a country spreading over half a continent, with nearly thirteen million population. The growth of the press paralleled that of the nation. From a total of thirty-five newspapers at the end of the American Revolution, the number increased to 359 in 1810 and to 861 in 1828. By 1839, there were 1,555 periodicals published in the United States, 116 of which were daily newspapers, 991 weeklies, 44 bi- and tri-weeklies, and the remainder principally magazines and reviews. Most of these were probably not "newspapers" in the modern sense, since they included every type of periodical publication. None, according to Mott, had as many as 5,000 subscribers. A circulation of one thousand was about average for the major metropolitan newspapers.

More significant than numbers of papers or circulation, however, was the extent to which the press penetrated to all parts of the country. The frontier town of Jacksonville, Illinois, for example, had a population of only 446 in 1830, yet postoffice records for 1831-32 showed that 486 persons getting their mail there subscribed to at least one periodical by mail.

Politics was the life blood of the "party press", both financially

and editorially. But even unsubsidized papers found in politics their most important source of news. Editors of the 1820s would displace exciting local news items or paid advertising to make room for the routine details of Congressional debates or for an account of a relatively insignificant speech by their Senator or Congressman. The official proceedings of the federal government were widely publicized, and in most instances were printed in detail. In spite of the iniquities of the patronage system, the policy of government subsidies served the purpose of solidifying a national public opinion and creating a body politic from the disorganized thirteen states of the Confederation.

The postal service and public information

The highly dramatic and controversial "party press" of the early 1800s tends to overshadow a parallel development in the sphere of public information, one of probably even greater significance than the system of direct subsidies. The Post Office Act of 1792 fixed the postage on newspapers at one cent each, and provided that "exchanges" should be carried free. One cent postage made possible low-cost circulation by mail, which was all-important in the development of an "informed public" during the westward expansion. Free handling of "exchanges" was equally important, since in the early years of the Republic all papers depended upon the exchange of papers with those of distant cities for most of their news. Jefferson's official mouthpiece, the National Intelligencer in Washington, D. C., supplied most of the papers

58 Lee, op. cit., p. 145.

of the nation with news from the national capitol for several decades by means of this free exchange system.

The phenomenal growth of the United States in population and extent during the first half of the nineteenth century taxed communication facilities to the utmost. Congress was continually under pressure to provide for expansion of the postal service, and to speed up delivery of the mails. In 1825 the government instituted an "express post" between major cities, and subsidized stage lines to carry the mail. The overwhelming dependence of newspapers upon the mails resulted in their giving political support to almost any suggested improvement in postal service, and the postal system was continually being improved and expanded under every national administration. Mott concludes that "the westward extension of the press would have been a fantastic impossibility without the enterprise of an ambitious post-office system." The importance of this contribution to public information may be seen by the fact that in 1832 fully 90 per cent of the volume of the mails consisted of newspapers. Both press and post office had a vigorous advocate during this period in John C. Calhoun who once affirmed that "the mail and the press are the nerves of the body politic."

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60 Ibid., p. 193.
61 Ibid., p. 194.
Governmental "propaganda": a résumé of accomplishment

The period from 1760 to 1840 was characterized by the continuing effort of government or political leaders in official positions to "inform" the public along narrowly-defined lines. Certainly each of the three separate "information" campaigns achieved its purpose. In each instance, however, political expediency rather than democratic principles determined the nature and direction of the campaign. Only through such extraordinary measures is it likely that success could have been assured---but the fact remains that these eighty years of government publicity were devoted to propaganda, not objective information.

Yet the net result was the welding of the American people together in a common endeavor, the development of a national character, and the stimulation of political interest and awareness on the part of every element of the population. Even the subsidization of the press had its good points, in that it supported more newspapers than might otherwise have been able to exist and stimulated the growth and maturation of the newspaper as an integral part of the political process. The impetus provided by the early public information efforts led to the development of the modern media of mass communication and logically to present-day public emphasis upon the need for full information as essential to popular government. In fact, without that intensive propaganda of the early years, popular government in America might never have developed to its present extent. As Madison so aptly expressed it, "a popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it,
is but a prologue to a farce or tragedy, or perhaps both. In eighty years, America progressed from a condition in which political information was practically non-existent to one where the activities of government and of elected officials received the widest publicity. Within this span of years, through the agency of quasi-official propaganda, a nation had been created, the machinery of national government constructed and put into practical operation, and the groundwork laid for intelligent self-government by the people.

The rise of the popular press

The federal government withdrew from the field of political education in the 1840s primarily because the country had by then outgrown the need for governmental stewardship. The public was taking a more active role in political affairs and the average citizen was less prone to accept without question the leadership and advice of his better informed brethren. By this time, also, the leisurely filtration of knowledge of political affairs from the seat of government to the people by way of "informed leaders" of the community, in accordance with the Hamiltonian concept, was patently impossible. The face of the nation was changing too rapidly to permit "leisurely" deliberation of almost any kind. Population was expanding at an unbelievable rate, nearly tripling between 1830 and 1860 alone. The nation of small farmers envisioned by Jefferson was rapidly vanishing as the tide of immigration brought millions of new citizens into mushrooming metropolitan

centers. Where only one person in a hundred lived in a town of eight thousand or more at the time of the founding of the Republic, by 1860 one out of every four Americans lived in a city. The influence of the intellectually elite in political affairs, and in guiding the opinions of "simple" men, was rapidly diminishing.

The control of opinion by direct subsidization of the press grew increasingly difficult and expensive as the number of newspapers increased, and as the population grew. But the "party press" of the early part of the nineteenth century had a limited audience at best; its day ended with the rise of the mass circulation penny papers in the 1830s. With the tremendous growth of such centers as New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Baltimore, low-cost, mass circulation of newspapers became possible. Technological improvements in printing solved the problem of production costs. The great expansion of public schools and steady decline of illiteracy brought more potential readers into existence. Rapid extension of the franchise to growing numbers of citizens, including newly-arrived immigrants, created the demand for a popular press, designed to serve the needs of the average man. By 1840 a new and increasingly powerful force had entered the political picture—a politically independent press, representing itself as the voice of the people and the guardian of their rights and privileges. Published daily, at a price the humblest worker could afford, the newspapers of the popular press grew rapidly in prestige and in circulation. Though few in number, the metropolitan penny papers quickly assumed national importance by virtue of their extensive circulations. Whereas
only a few years earlier, editors, hat in hand, sought favors and sub­sidies of political leaders, the situation was rapidly being reversed as the power of the press made itself felt at the top echelons of government.

In the quarter-century prior to the Civil War, the number of newspapers tripled, their circulations skyrocketed. Where no paper in 1833 had as many as 5,000 subscribers, by 1860 the great dailies, the nation­weekly papers, and popular weekly miscellanies had circulations in the tens or hundreds of thousands. Mott reports that in 1860 the New York Herald was the world's largest daily paper with a circulation of 77,000, while the weekly New York Tribune and New York Ledger had circulations of 200,000 and 400,000, respectively. In 1861, the weekly edition of Horace Greeley's New York Tribune had an estimated circulation of 287,750, of which nearly two-thirds was out-of-state circulation. This one paper has been called by one historian "the greatest single journalistic influence" of the fifties, while another states that "its role in the particular drama which ended with the Emancipation Proclamation was as great as any statesman's save Lincoln." Political

64 Mott, op. cit., p. 303.

65 As the preeminent anti-slavery organ, its influence upon northern public opinion can be surmised by the following breakdown of its circulation in the western states: Pennsylvania, 26,091; Ohio, 24,900; Illinois, 16,477; Indiana, 11,081; Wisconsin, 10,965; Iowa, 11,968; Michigan, 9,907; Kansas, 2,173; and California, 5,535.—Lee, op. cit., p. 284.


leaders who had previously regarded newspapers as convenient tools for engineering the consent of the electorate now found the press, in reality, a formidable fourth part of the national government, increasingly independent and hardly more susceptible to political domination than any of the three official branches of government. The popular press, as the self-styled "voice" of public opinion, forced political recognition of public opinion as a factor to be reckoned with, thus paving the way for a greater degree of popular government.

**The changing character of public information**

The rise of the popular press in America produced significant changes in the philosophy of public information. Emphasis shifted from political interest to public interest as the press sought to provide that which the public wanted to know rather than that which the political leaders wanted the public to know. Although no less aggressively partisan in political matters than before, the "new" popular press began to approximate the publicity function delegated to the press in democratic theory.

Political theorists had long preached that "government, even in its best form, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one." Unceasing publicity was presumed to be the sole means of insuring popular control of government and preventing the usurpation of power by the representatives of the people. Taking literally Jefferson's

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admonition that "every government degenerates when trusted to the rulers of the people alone," the popular press attempted to serve as the watchdog of public affairs. In accordance with the Benthamite concept of publicity of government, three main ends would be served:

1. To constrain the members of the assembly to perform their duty,

2. To secure the confidence of the people, and their assent to the measures of the legislature, and

3. To enable the governors to know the wishes of the governed.

These became the guiding principles of the "new" popular journalism and the foundation of popular government.

The nature of public information in the first half of the nineteenth century had been shaped, predominantly, by the dictates of partisan politics. The party press had been established for the purpose of disseminating a given set of political ideas, with no pretense of objectivity. Factual reporting of news events had little place in the political press of the early years. But the penny press, the advent of the telegraph and the linking of the nation by rail, produced perceptible changes in the character of public information. In the 1850s, Horace Greeley had already intimated that he thought "the news" of far more influence on the majority of readers than the editorial page. This trend was to become increasingly obvious in the ensuing decades.


Fewer and fewer papers espoused party labels, and an increasing number dropped their partisan connection to become "independent". Technological progress provided more news and provided it more swiftly than ever before. News coverage became all-important, and papers vied with one another in speed of reporting, in getting "exclusive" stories, or in "scooping" their rivals—a pattern which prevailed well into the twentieth century.

The railroad proved invaluable to the newspapers in providing faster distribution of papers, as well as in implementing news coverage. There were only twenty-three miles of railroad track in 1830, but twenty years later the total reached nine thousand miles. Speed in transmitting news had become so vital to the press that most of the metropolitan newspapers of the 1830s had their own pony express services from key news centers. In May, 1837, the Baltimore Sun took to the railroad to rush President Van Buren's message to Congress from Washington to Baltimore in less than two hours. Four years later, papers in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore chartered a special locomotive to bring copies of President Harrison's inaugural address from Washington to their cities.71

But the greatest boon to public information via the press was the invention of the telegraph. On May 25, 1844, Samuel F. B. Morse tapped out his famous message in code while sitting at a table in the old Supreme

Court chamber in Washington, D. C. That same afternoon, the telegraph was utilized to further the cause of public information as Morse sent the first telegraphic message to be published in a newspaper, the Baltimore Patriot: "One o'clock---There has just been made a motion in the House to go into committee of the whole on the Oregon question. Rejected---ayes, 79; nays, 86."\(^72\) Here for the first time was instantaneous communication over long distances---a factor which made possible the formation of public opinion while national issues were still being debated in Congress, and the increased participation of the public in determining public policy.

With the improved facilities of communication supplied by the telegraph, the change in the nature and content of public information became greatly accelerated. The greatest impetus in the development of the news function of the press came with the Civil War, when the eyes of the entire nation were turned to Washington. Even small dailies, thanks to the telegraph, could send their own "correspondents" to Washington to "cover" the war. By 1867, there were forty-nine registered correspondents in the Congressional press galleries, representing the leading papers and press services of the nation.\(^73\) The Civil War created an overwhelming demand for news. The average citizen during this period had an intense desire to know what was happening, but very little interest in why it happened. Even if he had wanted to

\(^72\) Ibid., p. 253

know the reasons behind the news, too much was happening in too short a time for him to keep up with the march of events. The decline of editorial opinion became even more marked with the increased public demand for news, prompting an English observer to note in 1870 that "the American reader will abandon a paper of his own political creed for one which has superior enterprise in publishing the latest and fullest items of events."74

This trend, too, had its effect upon public information. In the early years of government reporting the Washington "correspondent" was quite literally that. He wrote unhurriedly and at length, in longhand, his version of events in the nation's capitol. The slowness of the mails made day-to-day reporting impossible, even had it been the task expected of the reporter. Then during Jackson's administration, the long-drawn-out battle over the National Bank aroused editors to demand more news and less comment. In 1841 Bennett of the New York Herald established a Washington Bureau with staff of couriers instructed to take the day's stories back to New York "by the cars". This courier system, by horse or rail, was practiced by a number of major papers until the telegraph entered the scene.75

Through the telegraph, editors could get news from almost any part of the country, with the result that they gave increasing attention to editorial selection and reduced the amount of space given to any one

74 Mott, op. cit., p. 385.
75 Aikman, op. cit., p. 15.
news story. The immediate effect was the curtailment of space devoted
to routine happenings in the national capitol, the day-to-day business
of Congress, and unimportant congressional debates. Only when major
issues were under discussion, or during political campaigns, did news
of government receive full and complete coverage after the Civil War.

Public information and popular government

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the United States
experienced the most radical social, cultural and political changes in
its history, all producing inevitable effects upon the character of the
press and of public information. Immigration, in particular, became
democracy's greatest challenge. Immigrants poured into the United
States by the millions, reaching a peak of nine million arriving in a
single decade at the end of the century. The overwhelming majority
of these newcomers settled among their own kind in eastern cities,
posing difficult problems of assimilation and education. Bryce re­
ferred to the existence of large numbers of ignorant immigrants in
American cities in 1880 as a primary cause of "bossdom" in American
politics, contributing to the spawning and sustenance of the power of
the city political machine. The too-sudden enfranchisement of the
immigrant was, in Bryce's opinion, a serious error, for the foreigner
usually knew nothing "of the institutions of the country, of its
statesmen, of its political issues" and accordingly could not in any
degree participate in the formation of public opinion. "Such a sacri­
fice of common sense to abstract principles," he asserted, "has seldom
been made by any country." Yet, with grudging admiration, Bryce conceded the educative effect of public opinion in dissolving and assimilating the immigrant population. He was surprised how quickly public opinion imparted to the immigrant qualities of "orderliness, good sense, self-restraint, and a willingness to bow to the will of the majority," with the result that frequently the new citizen became more American than Americans themselves. Fitting the newcomers for citizenship was almost exclusively the burden of the metropolitan press in a score of more of the larger cities. The task was complicated by the fact that so any of the immigrants did not speak or read English, and the existing foreign language papers were overwhelmingly German.

In spite of the difficulties inherent in a situation in which one out of every four Americans of voting age was foreign-born and ordinarily not reached by the English-language press, the country as a whole made impressive gains in the dissemination of information in the latter part of the century. Daily papers increased in number from 489 in 1870 to 1,967 in 1900, with total circulation jumping from 2.6 million in 1870 to 15 million in 1900. During the same period illiteracy dropped sharply from 20 per cent to 10.7 per cent, despite the heavy influx of immigrants from non-English-speaking countries. In 1880 10 per cent of all adults subscribed to daily newspapers; twenty years later this

76 Bryce, op. cit., II, 99.

77 Newspapers in New York City served a population 80 per cent of which was foreign-born. Other cities had foreign-born populations ranging from 25 to 40 per cent of their inhabitants at the end of the century.—Emery and Smith, op. cit., pp. 342-43.
figure had increased to 26 per cent. 78

The widening sphere of public information progressed even more rapidly in the twentieth century as illiteracy approached the vanishing point and a rising level of public education brought an increasing proportion of the population under the influence of the press. The total population doubled between 1900 and 1950, but daily newspaper circulation increased three and one-half times, indicating a tremendous expansion in readership. 79 Illiteracy, by 1952, had declined to only 2.5 per cent, although twenty million immigrants had been added to the population in the preceding half-century. Even before radio appeared on the scene the Jeffersonian dream of a democratic nation in which the press was free and "every man able to read" had become a practical reality.

For one hundred years, approximately from 1830 to 1930, the responsibility for informing the public rested exclusively with the press. During this same period, stimulated by the rapid expansion of public information, popular government made its greatest strides. Suffrage was extended to more and more persons, until finally the last remaining barriers were removed for all time by constitutional amendments. The optimism of the nineteenth century engendered the belief that the cure

78 Ibid., pp. 345-46, 354.

79 Editor and Publisher International Yearbook Number for 1953 (New York: Editor and Publisher, 1953), p. 18.

for the ills of democracy was more democracy. The latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries were marked by a steady succession of gains for popular government. The direct primary, the initiative, referendum and recall, proved direct control over the state and local governmental machinery. At the national level, public opinion exercised an increasing measure of control over matters of policy through the press, the political parties, and, more recently, through the action of pressure groups.

Although the Constitution had been designed to keep popular government within narrowly prescribed limits and to make the House of Representatives the only part of the federal system in which the electorate was to play any direct part, this situation prevailed for only a limited period. First the Electoral College was surrendered to popular control by the informal action of state governments. Then the presidential nomination was brought more into the open by the transfer of the nominating power from the caucus to the national nominating convention. Eventually, the system of election of presidential electors by the state legislatures yielded to popular election. It took a constitutional amendment to bring about direct election of Senators, and still another amendment to limit the power of the out-going Congress by shortening the period between the election and the seating of Congressmen-elect.

The effects of control of public information by the press

Historically, there have been two basic patterns of American experience with public information. The first was that of the pre-press
period in which control over information rested with the political leadership, with the men who composed the government and considered government the fountain-head of political instruction of the electorate. These leaders assumed as a matter of course the closest cooperation between government and the people, with the press an important but relatively neutral liaison between the two.

The second pattern was that of the popular press, in which the press took upon itself full responsibility for public information. Instead of attempting to strengthen the relationship between government and the public, the press, in effect, capitalized upon prevailing popular suspicion and distrust of government and government officials in attempting to champion the cause of public opinion. The result was that, instead of information supplying the necessary link between the public and its government to establish a more harmonious relationship, the press and public were arrayed against government in a continuing struggle for power. This situation, which has prevailed during most of the national political history, greatly accelerated the increase in popular control over governmental machinery at the expense of public understanding and interest in politics. In consequence, there has occurred a "functional derangement of the relationship between the mass of the people and the government," as Lippmann expresses it, in which "the people have acquired power which they are incapable of exercising, and the governments they elect have lost powers which they must recover if they are to govern."81

The implications of government by public opinion have occasioned grave concern on the part of political scientists since before the end of the past century. Bryce paid impressive tribute to the contribution of the press in the political education of the American people but qualified his praise by saying that such education "is nevertheless a superficial education", one "sufficient to enable them to think they know something about the great problems of politics; insufficient to show them how little they know."\(^{82}\) In appraising the relationship between public opinion and popular government, Lowell was critical of the "self-confidence that causes everyone to think himself capable of forming a valuable opinion on every subject" and the prevailing lack of "mutual confidence in one another," which, in his opinion, focussed too much attention upon "the problem of preventing representative bodies from acting contrary to public opinion."\(^{83}\)

While most of the criticism of public opinion has not given heed to the responsibility of the press in this regard, there can be no denying that the press is not altogether without blame. The press for nearly one hundred years was the self-appointed mentor of the American people, and their primary source of political information. The press contributed immeasurable to the maintenance of the gap between government and the public by emphasizing the constant need for "pitiless publicity" of government rather than limiting its activities.

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82 Bryce, op. cit., II, 284.

to the impartial distribution of the news and information necessary for the formation of rational opinions. Woodrow Wilson was greatly concerned over the fact that "the utterances of the Press have greater weight and are accorded greater credit, though the Press speaks entirely without authority, than the utterances of Congress, though Congress possess all authority," charging that "the editor directs public opinion, the Congressman obeys it." 84

The chief indictment against the press in its public information role is that newspapers, rather than facilitating the flow of information between government and the people, actually impede it. Newspapers developed into potent political forces, enjoying a privileged status under the Constitution, and controlling the sole channels of communication between elected officials and the electorate. In the opinion of some authorities, the press "lost interest in its vital political functions of distributing news and providing a forum for discussion" in favor of furthering its own ends. 85

The political history of the United States, prior to 1930, may be said to have been dominated by two opposing concepts of public information. The first, with information controlled by government, consisted of a systematic political education of the electorate. The second, in which the press controlled information, was based on distrust


of government and depended upon "pitiless publicity" of government for its effectiveness and educative value. Both concepts in practice were highly successful in some respects, but eventually suffered the inevitable consequences of an extreme position. Government control led to the corruption of the press and the flagrant subversion of the information process to an instrument of political persuasion rather than of public information. Press control led to the irresponsible exercise of political power by the press, an undue emphasis upon news instead of information, and the continuing hostility of the public toward its government. It is significant to note that under neither system was public information fully developed, nor were responsibilities of each of the parties concerned given formal expression.

Still untried as a regular peacetime political operation is the application of a policy of public information in which cooperation between government and the press is required and in which responsibility for information is shared equally by the agencies of government and the agencies of mass communication. The growing complexity of modern government points more and more to the need for a greater degree of coordination in public information. The haphazard education supplied by the press may have sufficed in the period before 1900, but, as Lowell remarked more than a quarter-century ago, "the amount of knowledge needed for the administration of public affairs is increasing more rapidly than the diffusion of such knowledge," thus "lessening the capacity of the ordinary citizen to form an opinion of his own on
the various matters that arise in conducting the government." In the opinion of most modern authorities the problem is no longer one of getting enough information, but of getting enough of the right kind of information. Becker observed that the "means of gathering and communicating information about all that is being said and done and thought all over the world have become so perfected that no man can possibly take in, much less assimilate, more than a very small part of it." 87

An increasing number of writers have indicated the pressing need for some process of weeding out the trivial and unimportant and assuring the voter access to the basic information he needs to know. Rosten points out that the "citizen of today is unquestionably better informed about his world than any other citizen ever was; but is he better oriented? The ordinary man is bombarded by facts, charges, affirmations; but does this clarify or confuse?" And he asserts that the need for clarification of political issues is greater today than it ever has been, becoming more urgent as public affairs become more "complicated and ominous." 88

More and more frequently, the news concept of public information has come under attack as being inadequate to the task of fully and

86 Lowell, op. cit., p. 49.


adequately informing the electorate. Newspapers have encountered a formidable mental barrier on the part of the reading public which effectively limits the political role of the press in a modern state. Hocking succinctly stated the problem in *Freedom of the Press*: "The democracy of mental participation by the people in the main lines of public action runs shallow. And with its best efforts the press is unable, at the moment, to make that participation substantial and profound." An increasing number of writers, alarmed at the apparent inability of the press to stimulate greater public participation in the political process, conclude that making large masses of information available is substantially different from "informing the public". Many of them imply that the press has overextended itself in trying to inform the public on every conceivable subject. The need of twentieth century man is for "additional sources of information" which will "stimulate popular interest as well as furnish a factual basis for intelligent opinions." 

To the newspaper press of the nineteenth century must go the credit for bringing the goal of popular government to fruition. But the complexities have introduced an ever-increasing demand for the popularization and clarification of political issues, for a more adequate means of providing the necessary understanding of government processes


and problems—a demand which the press as presently constituted is unable to fulfill.
CHAPTER III

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE BROADCASTING MEDIA
TO PUBLIC INFORMATION

For 180 years of American political history, the dominant position of the press in the information process went unchallenged. Then, in 1920, a new medium of mass communications appeared, which was destined to challenge the newspaper and periodical press as the primary source of political education and information. On August 31, 1920, radio station 6MK (later WJW) in Detroit went on the air with the first broadcast of the returns of a state primary election. From that day on, station 6MK offered its handful of listeners (mostly amateur wireless enthusiasts) local and regional news accounts provided by the staff of the Detroit News—owner of the station—supplemented by the latest national and international news from the major wire services. ¹

Political news likewise constituted the first program offering of America's second broadcasting station—KDKA, Pittsburgh. Station KDKA commenced regular daily broadcasting operations on November 2, 1920, with the returns of the Harding-Cox presidential election. ²

During the next three decades, radio broadcasting grew steadily in importance until it has become a major source of public information.


The social significance of radio

Practically from the first day that radio appeared on the American scene, its impact on society has been the subject of widespread discussion and conjecture. During the 1930s, in particular, broadcasting had so demonstrated its popular appeal that social scientists were extravagantly predicting every sort of social and political gain as the immediate result of this new medium. Glenn Frank, former president of the University of Wisconsin, told educational broadcasters in 1932:

I have an exalted conception of what radio can mean to the American future. I think the invention of the radio equals in significance the invention of the printing press. Specifically, the radio promises to render two important services to the American future: (1) it promises to unify us as a people, and (2) it promises to debunk our leadership.

Only a year earlier, the noted historian, James T. Shotwell of Columbia University, enthusiastically foretold that radio would become a potent factor in the solution of the problems of a democratic society:

Challenging situations will continue to arise with every new orientation of society, but I am confident that through the use of radio there will be brought to their solution a more direct, a more rational, a more intelligent technique than has ever been used in the realm of politics in the past.

Such optimism seemed justified in view of the phenomenal growth of the new medium within slightly more than a decade. The 1930 Census


reported that 12,078,345 families possessed radio sets,\(^5\) approximately 40 per cent of the total number of families. Five years later, the Columbia Broadcasting System estimated that the number of radio homes had climbed to 21,455,799, or 70 per cent.\(^6\) And each of these families were listening to radio an average of four to five hours each day.\(^7\)

To evaluate the effects of the broadcasting medium, social psychologists Cantril and Allport conducted an extensive investigation. Their findings constitute the first definitive work published on the role of radio in society. They prefaced their conclusions with the acknowledgment that radio is "preeminent as a means of social control and epochal in its influence upon the mental horizons of men,"\(^8\) admitting meanwhile that "even now we do not know the ultimate consequences of radio for civilisation."\(^9\)

Among the many significant influences noted by Cantril and Allport, the political importance of radio is of special interest. They found radio "a powerful agent of democracy" capable of carrying messages "instantaneously and inexpensively to the farthest and most inaccessible

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\(^8\) Cantril and Allport, op. cit., p. vii.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 19.
regions", penetrating "all manner of social, political and economic barriers."\(^{10}\) This made radio "the greatest single democratizing agent since the invention of printing," providing politicians and government an additional and more efficient means for communicating with the public.\(^{11}\) Radio, said Cantril and Allport, provided an opportunity for greater balance in the presentation of current issues than possible either via the newspaper or the political rally, and they thought it probable that the new medium improved "the capacity of the average man to listen intelligently to what he hears."\(^{12}\) The real popularity of radio, however, was not due to public recognition of its political significance, but primarily "to its capacity for providing the listener an opportunity to extend his environment easily and inexpensively, and to participate with a feeling of personal involvement in the events of the outside world from which he would otherwise be excluded."\(^{13}\)

Albig, writing at about the same time as Cantril and Allport, was much less enthusiastic and more moderate in his appraisal of the benefits accruing from the broadcasting medium. He viewed with foreboding the fact that American radio was essentially nothing more than the "amplification, repetition and diffusion of existing tastes, standards and interests." While radio might prove an effective instrument of

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10 Ibid., p. 20.
11 Ibid., p. 19.
13 Ibid., p. 260.
mass education, it might at the same time constitute a "constantly more powerful agency for popular information or error, realistic knowledge or distortion." But whether for propaganda or popular discussion, Albig conceded radio to be the great unifying agent in modern life and if, in modern democratic thinking, "large publics are to be consulted frequently" and diverse publics unified, "radio is a most opportune invention." 14

**Information a legal responsibility of broadcasting**

From its inception, broadcasting came under the direct supervision of the federal government, although it was not until 1927 that Congress formally established a regulatory code. Under the terms of the Radio Act of 1927, and its successor, the Communications Act of 1934, all licensing of radio stations was placed under the jurisdiction of a federal regulatory agency. On the assumption that the airwaves belong to the people, the yardstick for issuing or renewing broadcast licenses was to be the "public convenience, interest, or necessity." Under Section 303 (g) of the Federal Communications Act, the Federal Communications Commission is directed specifically to "encourage the larger and more effective use of radio in the public interest."

The public interest standard has never been fully defined, but public information has appeared repeatedly as one criterion of serving the "public interest" in written opinions handed down by the FCC in broadcasting cases coming before it. The old Federal Radio Commission,

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predecessor of the present Federal Communications Commission, held that a station operating in the public interest was "a sort of mouthpiece on the air for the community it serves, over which its public events of general interest, its political campaigns, its election results . . . and discussion of its public issues may be broadcast." 15 One of the most comprehensive statements of official attitude toward broadcasting as a medium of information was that issued with respect to editorialising on the air, in 1949:

It is axiomatic that one of the most vital questions of mass communications in a democracy is the development of an informed public opinion through the public dissemination of news and ideas concerning the vital public issues of the day. Basically, it is in recognition of the great contribution which radio can make in the advancement of this purpose that portions of the radio spectrum are allocated to . . . radio broadcasting. Unquestionably, then, the standards of public interest, convenience and necessity as applied to radio-broadcasting must be interpreted in the light of this basic purpose. The Commission has consequently recognised the necessity for licensees to devote a reasonable percentage of their broadcast time to the presentation of news and programs devoted to the consideration and discussion of public issues of interest in the community. . . And we have recognised. . . the paramount right of the public in a free society to be informed and to have presented to it for acceptance or rejection the different attitudes and viewpoints. . . held by the various groups which make up the community. 16

This official expression of broadcasters' responsibility for public information is the major point of distinction between the respective roles of newspapers and radio and television in the information


process. The function of the press has traditionally been implicit, but never defined by law or governmental fiat. Broadcasting, on the other hand, was committed initially to serve the public with news and information on public issues and public affairs in an impartial manner.

**The political use of radio**

Just as political education became one of the primary functions of the press in its earliest years, radio quite early found an enthusiastic welcome from politicians. As fast as the listening public grew in size, political parties expanded their use of the new medium to expound party policies and to show off their candidates. In 1924 the Democrats spent an estimated $40,000 for radio time during the presidential campaign, increasing that amount to $6,000,000 four years later, in the 1928 campaign.17 Both Republicans and Democrats spent approximately ten times as much on radio as they did on newspaper advertising in 1928.18 Odegard and Helms report that radio broadcasting consumed an impressively large proportion of total campaign expenditures, absorbing 18 per cent of Democratic and 10 per cent of Republican resources in 1928; nearly the same proportion of Democratic funds and more than 20 per cent of Republican money in 1932. However, in 1936, although total radio expenditures were greater than in any previous campaign, "relatively they declined, being only 12.9 per cent of the


Democratic total and 11.1 per cent of all that the Republicans spent.\footnote{19}

In 1932 both parties spent an estimated five million dollars on radio at the national, state and local levels. Network time bought by Republican, Democratic and Socialist parties totalled 100 hours in that year, while in the 1936 campaign the two major parties used 125 hours of network broadcast time costing more than two million dollars.\footnote{20}

Radio and the New Deal

Radio made its greatest advance as a political instrument during the New Deal. The policies devised by the Roosevelt administration in 1932 to meet the national emergency were so revolutionary as to require the widest mass support to assure their success. Like the Revolutionary propagandists of the 1760s and the Federalist politicians of the Constitutional period, New Deal leaders recognised the necessity for an aggressive campaign of public information. But the majority of American newspapers were opposed to the "Roosevelt revolution" and could not be depended upon to cooperate effectively in promoting the social and economic reforms proposed by the Administration.

The New Deal administration moved into the sphere of public information by creating its own publicity machinery, which expanded rapidly along with a related expansion in federal power and the gigantic growth in governmental activities. Radio became the chief


\footnote{20} Political Supplement, \textit{New Republic}, March 17, 1937.
agency of New Deal "propaganda". Franklin D. Roosevelt, although not the first president to make use of radio during his term of office, quickly became known as the "radio President" owing to the frequency with which and the manner in which he used the broadcasting medium. His "Fireside Chats" to the American people became a potent factor in restoring public morale and, in the opinion of at least one authority, "exemplify the most effective political use of radio as an instrument of democracy." 21 Unlike the customary formal policy speeches, the Fireside Chats had the distinction of being both highly personal and short, in most cases being less than thirty minutes in length.

Adept in the use of radio, Roosevelt relied heavily upon this medium to bring New Deal measures directly before the people for debate and discussion, successfully by-passing both Congress and the press. In spite of the tremendous personal appeal of the President in his radio addresses, the New Deal "information campaign" was not limited to presidential speech-making. In an unprecedented fashion, members of the Cabinet were brought before the public, by radio, to play a major role in interpreting the policies under their jurisdiction. 22


22 Secretary of Agriculture Wallace went "on the air" 21 times during 1933, 11 times during 1934. Postmaster General Farley equalled the 1933 record of Secretary Wallace in his radio speaking during 1934. Total Cabinet radio addresses totalled 78 in that year. The President himself spoke over the radio 23 times in 1934, six of these talks being of the "fireside chat" variety. Mrs. Roosevelt was heard 45 times in the first twenty-one months of her husband's administration, exclusive of her regular sponsored series. The Vice President, John Nance Garner, was the "least-talkingest" man of the Administration, making only one
The federal administrative agencies set up to carry out the various new policies of the Roosevelt administration likewise made extensive use of radio to explain their work and to enlist public support for their activities.23

By 1935 opposition to New Deal "propaganda" had grown to such proportions that Administration leaders made fewer personal appearances on national radio networks. The information machinery of the federal administrative agencies which by that time was in full operation and was far more subtle in its methods, had become increasingly important in the educative efforts of the New Deal. But the continuing "publicity" campaign by the executive branch aroused Congressional ire and was constantly under attack in the press. McCamy reported that during a period of four months in 1937, there were ten regularly scheduled network program series (totalling approximately 80 broadcasts) carried by the networks in behalf of government agencies. In addition, these agencies utilized 28 3/4 hours of network time for 88 individual programs on a "one-time only" basis. Congress, to keep up with the publicity effort of the executive branch, found it necessary


23 During the last three months of 1936 alone, the Social Security Board had 35 network broadcasts, supplying speakers for an additional 114 broadcasts over local stations. The Resettlement Administration in 1937 successfully enlisted the cooperation of local stations in broadcasting an agency-produced 15-minute transcribed program, with 460 stations (half of the nation's total) carrying it. James L. McCamy, *Government Publicity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), pp. 128, 142.
to resort to similar measures. During the same four months in 1937, members of Congress were heard over the national networks for a total of 31 1/2 hours.²⁴

The New Deal may be said to have introduced "political radio" to the American people. And in so doing, it made two important contributions to public information: the use of radio in bringing government closer to the people, and the publicizing, for the first time, of individual members of the Cabinet. Under previous administrations, members of the President's official family were little known and made few public appearances. Roosevelt, however, put key Cabinet officers in the limelight wherever possible, to explain policies of the Administration. The magnitude of the task of informing the public on such a wide range of detailed federal activities required extraordinary coordination of effort. Radio made it possible for the Administration to carry its program directly to the people, to explain the new policies, and to seek public support. Just as it would have been difficult if not impossible for the Federalists to have established constitutional government in 1790 without the medium of the press, it would have been even more difficult for the New Deal to have achieved the transfer from the {\it\textit{laissez faire}} to the positive state without the medium of radio. The New Deal experience brought social scientist William A. Orton to the conclusion that "the use of radio for political or governmental purposes is probably its most important social

²⁴ \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 94–5, 145.
The "last" radio campaign

The 1948 presidential campaign deserves special mention as being the last political campaign in which radio played a dominant role (after 1948 emphasis shifted rapidly to television.) In 1948, political parties spent less money in purchases of network time than in 1944, expenditures being $1,202,000 in 1948 as compared with $1,780,000 four years previously. The Republicans spent an estimated 55 per cent of the total 1948 figure, with the remainder divided among Democrats, the Progressive Party, and the CIO and other labor groups supporting Truman's candidacy.

In addition to actual time purchases, each presidential candidate benefited from opportunities for "free" time over the national radio networks. In the pre-campaign period prior to the political conventions, the networks capitalised on public interest in politics by broadcasting practically every speech made by any presidential aspirant, as well as offering such political "prospects" immemorable opportunities for "guest appearances" on established information programs such as "Meet the Press". From January to July, 1948, party "hopefuls" appeared on 74 coast-to-coast network broadcasts. President Truman


had a decided edge in having sixteen major speeches broadcast in addition to his regular messages to Congress. Governor Dewey was heard in seven network appearances, Norman Thomas and Henry A. Wallace had eight broadcasts each, while six other "possibles" were featured on the remaining thirty-one broadcasts.27

Radio contributed greatly to the success of Truman's "barnstorming" tour of the West, generally conceded to have been a key factor in his election. While Truman spoke approximately 275 times during more than 22,000 miles of travel in thirty-six states, the number of persons who actually saw the President was relatively insignificant.28 But each of his "whistle-stop" speeches of any consequence was broadcast over local stations or over limited regional networks to extend the effective range of his local campaigning to hundreds of thousands of voters along his route. This local coverage was an immeasurable advantage for it gave the President an unprecedented opportunity to talk to each sectional and occupational group in terms of self-interest, while Dewey, depending exclusively upon network radio, could conduct only a "high level" campaign dealing in generalities.

By 1948 radio had become so vital a part of American life that few people were outside the range of campaign oratory. But "radio's greatest

27 Ibid., p. 434.

contribution to the 1948 campaign" was not so much the presentation of issues as the opportunity it offered for "millions of voters to form their own judgments of the candidates' personalities at first-hand." Roosevelt found the informality of his Fireside Chat a most effective tool for political persuasion. Truman, in his "whistle-stop" campaign, relied heavily upon informality and a "down-to-earth" approach which brought the campaign closer to the personal experience of the average voter. Radio had previously been praised for having reintroduced the spoken word to politics, giving the political debate a new vitality. The culmination of the 1948 campaign demonstrated forcefully the added value of radio in projecting the personality of the candidate as well as enhancing the presentation of issues.

**The importance of radio news**

Although politics represents an important part of radio's contribution to public information, the day-in and day-out business of news reporting and commentary on public affairs by radio is even more significant. Radio news has become the most popular form of radio programming, and has been primarily responsible for the extension of "freedom of the press" to include broadcasting as well as newspapers.

During the first decade of radio history, news was relatively unimportant, but the picture changed rapidly in the 1930s. Returns of the Smith-Hoover election were broadcast in 1928, as they had been in previous elections, but only on a bulletin basis. In 1932, network

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29 Summers, pp. 218, p. 436.
radio went "all-out" and devoted the entire evening to election returns. As Paul White, former news chief for the Columbia Broadcasting System, remarks in *News on the Air*, "radio went to town—never before had it covered anything so fully."\(^{30}\)

This was the year, too, of the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby, providing good news copy for many months as the public avidly followed every development in the search for the kidnapper. The Hauptmann trial was the most widely publicised case in history and for a time Flemington, New Jersey, the scene of the trial, became the news center of the United States. No broadcasts from the courtroom itself were authorised, although some of the proceedings "were, for a time, surreptitiously broadcast."\(^{31}\) Radio commentators, however, were on hand throughout the trial, and Boake Carter and Gabriel Heatter "first began attracting sizable radio audiences by their Lindbergh-case broadcasts."\(^{32}\)

From a study of radio programming on nine major stations, covering the decade from 1925-1935, Albig reported that news averaged less than 2.0 per cent of the total program time, with a low of 0.4 per cent during one of the months studied (July, 1932), and a high of 3.1 per cent in February, 1926. As late as February, 1934, news constituted


\(^{32}\) White, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
only 1.0 per cent of the total broadcast time, and 1.5 per cent in July of that year. 33

Yet, during 1932 alone, CBS broadcast 93 different programs from seventeen foreign sources, eleven of them from the Geneva Disarmament Conference. 34 And the march of events abroad stimulated increasing attention to news and special events. In 1936 King Edward VIII "made a world-wide broadcast of his famous 'woman I love' abdication—an event that drew what was described as the largest audience ever to listen to a speech." 35 In 1937 the Coronation of King George VI was the most elaborately covered "special event" up to that time. 36 And in October of that year, Senator Hugo L. Black paid impressive tribute to the objectivity of radio by using it as the medium to reply to critics of his affiliation with the Ku Klux Klan, saying that by using radio he could prevent "editing or interpretation" of his remarks. 37 Then came the Sudeten crisis, threatening to plunge Europe into war, and the American public was "there" by radio. H. V. Kaltenborn went on the air many times a day for twenty days, analyzing and interpreting the daily developments, building the largest news audience the American public had ever known. During this period NBC and CBS together brought

33 Albig, op. cit., p. 347.
35 Loc. cit.
36 White, op. cit., p. 45.
more than a thousand foreign broadcasts from more than two hundred 
radio reporters to the radio listeners of America. And the public 
clamored for more. 36

After the Munich Conference interest in radio news diminished some¬
what, although it still remained at a relatively high level. Both pub­
lic interest and the number of newscasts increased tremendously the 
following year with the German invasion of Poland. World War II gave 
radio its greatest impetus as a medium of public information. Radio 
brought the nation its first news of Pearl Harbor. Radio not only 
kept the public informed of the progress of the war but provided vivid 
eyewitness accounts of such events as the sinking of the Graf Spee, the 
fall of Singapore, the bombing of Berlin, London during the blitz, and 
the invasion of Normandy——complete with the actual sounds of battle. 
This was more than mere public information——it was something new in 
the way of human experience.

War news became of utmost importance to radio. Whereas in 1937 
the National Broadcasting Company devoted only 2.8 per cent of its total 
program hours to news, this figure had increased to 26.4 per cent by 
1944. 39 According to Charsley, "radio news on the four major networks 
increased by more than 300 per cent during the war years," from 1,251

36 Ibid., p. 27.
39 Ibid., p. 31.
hours of news in 1939 to 5,522 hours in 1944.\(^{40}\)

News programs continued as a significant part of overall broadcasting operations during the entire war period, as Table I demonstrates. Immediately after the war, news programming was somewhat reduced in volume on both networks and local stations. A broadcasting industry survey in November, 1946, indicated that news and commentary programs took up about one-eighth of all radio time.\(^{41}\) However, a similar study in December, 1953, showed that news programming had shown a considerable increase, constituting between 17 and 21 per cent of total program time, with stations generally reporting that news was even more important than it had been five years earlier.\(^{42}\)

The audience for radio news

Audience surveys of radio listening consistently report that "news" is America's favorite type of radio program. Increased public dependence on radio for news during World War II showed a gradual trend from newspapers to radio as a major source of all news. When the American Institute of Public Opinion asked in May, 1937, "Would you prefer getting national news in a daily paper or by radio?" 50 per cent of those interviewed favored newspapers, only 40 per cent preferred radio. When the same question was asked again in March, 1939,

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p. 31.

\(^{41}\) Chester and Garrison, op. cit., p. 46.

TABLE I

COMMERCIAL EVENING NETWORK TIME DEVOTED
TO COMMENTATORS, NEWS AND TALKS
1938-1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Per cent*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winter, 1938-1939</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer, 1939</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter, 1939-1940</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer, 1940</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter, 1940-1941</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer, 1941</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter, 1941-1942</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer, 1942</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter, 1942-1943</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer, 1943</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter, 1943-1944</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer, 1944</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter-Spring, 1945</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer, 1945</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures from Broadcasting Yearbooks, 1940-1946, reported in Charnley, p. 31.
and in July, 1942, the situation was reversed. Radio in 1942 was the choice of 62 per cent, while the number favoring newspapers had dropped to 34 per cent. Similar surveys have shown radio in an exceptionally strong position as compared with the press both as a source of news and in public confidence.

An interesting sidelight on the public reaction to politics on radio was reported in a Fortune poll in April, 1936, showing that 38 per cent of those interviewed wanted about the same proportion of political speeches on the air as the amount then available, with only 15 per cent indicating a desire to hear more, while 27.9 per cent wanted fewer, and 18.3 preferred to have no political speeches broadcast. Yet, in November, 1940, the American Institute of Public Opinion asked people where they got their information about the 1940 political campaign. Radio was named as the major source of political information by 52 per cent of the respondents, 30 per cent said "newspapers", 4 per cent named "both", while 6 per cent were unable to say which had been more important to them.

Public attitudes toward broadcasting are unquestionably significant, but the best indication of the impact of radio is probably the size of the listening audience tuning to major news events being broad-


44 Ibid., p. 710.

Two speeches by President Roosevelt enjoy the distinction of peak listenership, one on December 9th, 1941, following Pearl Harbor, and the other on February 23rd, 1942. Each speech had a Hooper rating of nearly 80, according to Charnley, meaning that eight out of ten radio sets in America were tuned to the broadcast. Roosevelt also set the daytime audience record with a 65 rating on his noontime speech of December 8th, 1941, calling for war with Japan. Each of Roosevelt's two record speeches was estimated to have been heard by sixty million adults.46

Ackerman states that there were at least ten occasions on which President Roosevelt addressed American audiences estimated at more than forty million persons, while the Roosevelt-Dewey election returns on the night of November 7, 1944, were heard by radio by an estimated 100,000,000 persons in the United States and overseas.47

The Importance of Radio after Thirty Years

Llewellyn White, assistant director of the Commission on Freedom of the Press, refers to the fact that radio is now an essential part of the modern press, and that "its ability to draw millions of citizens into close and simultaneous contact with leaders and with events of the moment gives it a reach and an influence of peculiar importance.

46 Ordinarily Roosevelt speeches averaged ratings of 40 to 50, while Truman's highest rating was 47.4, Winston Churchill's 45. Top evening network programs rarely got ratings as high as 40, even in radio's best (pre-television) years. Charnley, op. cit., p. 42.

in the management of public affairs." In White's opinion, the most important feature of radio is that it reaches more people than does any other medium and, he thinks, it always will. The statement of the Commission, itself, concludes with the prediction that "radio, as much as, or more than, the printing press, may eventually become the chief medium for distributing words, images, and ideas in our society." 49

Chester and Garrison sum up the accomplishments of the broadcasting medium by remarking that "in no way has broadcasting established itself more firmly with the American public than as a medium for transmitting important and reliable information." 50 Notwithstanding the inroads of television upon radio audiences, radio news still continues to serve millions of Americans. Top network news programs still draw audiences averaging between one and two million homes reached with each broadcast, on a week-in and week-out basis. Radio set sales continue at the rate of about four million each year. There can be little doubt that "radio has achieved a permanent place in the American social scene." 51

The popular appeal of radio news is explained by social scientists in various ways. Studies by Lazarsfeld and others point to the special popularity that radio enjoys among persons in the lower educational and


49 Ibid., pp. x-xi.

50 Chester and Garrison, op. cit., p. 7.

51 Ibid., p. v.
economic levels. For these individuals in particular, radio simplified the information process by permitting "the individual to gain an understanding of the events of the day without any effort on his part greater than snapping a switch and listening." Both the effort and education required in reading are eliminated.

Jack Gould, radio-TV editor of The New York Times, appraises the current status of radio, saying: "Today, compared to what it once was, radio definitely has lost stature and importance... Television generates news and excitement in almost everything it does; radio is taken for granted." He refers to the spring of 1949 as radio's "last golden hour", and then television came in to take up where radio had left off. But Gould maintains that the result may be exceedingly beneficial for radio, for the public now turns to radio for a different kind of programming than it expects from television, and radio news can be increasingly important since television has shown no superiority in this area. For straight news reporting, where visual impressions are either unimportant or lacking, radio still occupies a position of primacy in the field of public information.

52 Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Radio and the Printed Page (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940), pp. 15 ff.


Social effects of television

Television made its public debut in America in 1939 with a broadcast of the opening of the New York World's Fair, including an address by President Roosevelt. But there were only a few hundred receivers able to pick up the event since the communications industry had not yet gone into commercial set production. This same situation prevailed in 1940 when pictures of the Republican Convention in Philadelphia were transmitted by coaxial cable to the Empire State Building in New York for televising in that area, and likewise during the telecasting of the 1940 election returns later in the year. As a public information vehicle, television was still "unknown" to the American people in 1940, and the war production program put a stop to any further development of the new medium until 1945.

But television was being widely publicized in the most extravagant terms as the cure-all for the problems of society, much as was radio somewhat earlier. Most authorities, including both social scientists and leaders in the television industry, tempered enthusiasm with common sense in evaluating the future of the new medium. As early as 1939, David Sarnoff, president of the Radio Corporation of America, cautioned against over-optimism, but predicted that "television will finally bring to people in their homes, for the first time in history, a complete means of instantaneous participation in the sights and sounds of the entire outer world." He emphasized the fact that the combined "emotional results of both seeing and hearing an event or a performance at the instant of its occurrence become new
forces to be reckoned with—forces infinitely greater, in his opinion, than those resulting from radio or other media. This was before television had produced any effects upon society.

Engendered by the tremendous strides television has made in its short history, the earlier caution of industry leaders has been replaced by an exuberant self-confidence. Hugh M. Beville, director of research for the National Broadcasting Company, typifies thinking in the broadcasting industry when he says:

The addition of living pictures to sound has produced in television a new and unique medium of mass communication. . . Television has often been characterized as "bringing the world into your home." More truly, television takes the viewer from his home to the very scene of the telecast. The viewer gets a feeling of "being there," of immediacy which gives to telecasts authority and significance possessed by no other medium of mass communication. . . As a means of educating and informing the American public on important international, national and local issues, television is in a field by itself.

Even the solid, conservative New York Times has gone on record editorially to stress the value of television to political democracy in words of optimism:

Television is young. When it grows up an entire nation will see as well as hear great distant figures and events. Democracy will again be a town meeting. May it take


56 Hugh M. Beville, Jr., in Wilbur Schramm, editor, Communications in Modern Society (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1948), p. 129.
strength from this invention.\textsuperscript{57}

Wayne Coy, while chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, predicted that the day will come "when television will be the most powerful instrument of communication ever devised, the most universal and most effective purveyor of education, information, culture, and entertainment."\textsuperscript{58}

The growth of television

Television had been the subject of experimentation for nearly fifteen years before the Federal Communications Commission authorised commercial operation on July 1, 1941. At that time, there were seven stations on the air: three in New York City, one in Schenectady, New York, and one each in Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{59} Only a few months later, after Pearl Harbor, all television activities were suspended "for the duration". At this time there were an estimated 4,700 television sets in the entire New York area.\textsuperscript{60}

The original seven stations formed the nucleus of the postwar television industry, although it was nearly a year after the end of the war before any new stations went on the air. But less than two


\textsuperscript{58} Wayne Coy, quoted in Chester and Garrison, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 42-43.


\textsuperscript{60} Chester and Garrison, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 42.
months after the cessation of hostilities, a tri-city network was organized between New York, Schenectady and Philadelphia to carry a telecast of Navy Day observances. President Truman appeared on the program. This was the first time that a President had made a television network appearance and was the forerunner of many other such appearances to come.  

In the next decade television expanded phenomenally across the nation, and by April 1, 1955, the total number of stations on the air had risen to 420 in 248 cities, with 34,338,500 homes having television sets---two out of every three in the nation.  

Politics and tv

Politics made news on television almost from the day of the first postwar telecasts. Even though there were only thirty-seven tv stations and 350,000 receiving sets in 1948, the "availability of television networks was a paramount factor in the determination of the Democratic and Republican National Committees to select Philadelphia as the scene of their 1948 national conventions." The Republican National Convention was telecast over an eleven-station network.


63 Beville, op. cit., p. 129.
network, from Baltimore to Boston. Film résumés or kinescope recordings were sent daily by plane to stations in nine cities farther west. The total estimated television audience for the first "televised" national political convention was ten million. The radio industry outdid itself on this occasion, with approximately 1,500 radio stations carrying the proceedings, reaching an estimated audience of 62,000,000---six times the total for television.\textsuperscript{64} The following month the same stations which had covered the Republic convention in June telecast the Democratic National Convention, presumably reaching an audience of the same size. The election itself received unprecedented coverage. By election night, forty-two stations were linked together to carry an all-night network telecast of election returns, while radio conducted a similar effort on a much broader scale to serve the non-television audience.\textsuperscript{65}

The inauguration of President Truman in 1949 was the first event of its kind to be telecast, another milestone in the development of television as an "information" medium. The telecast was carried over a 34-station network including sixteen cities from Boston to St. Louis. The estimated audience, however, still did not exceed the ten million figure attributed to the Conventions.\textsuperscript{66}

Dewey is reputed to have pioneered in the political use of

\textsuperscript{64} Dunlap, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 176.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., pp. 178, 180.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p. 182.
television in the New York gubernatorial race in 1950. But it was the televising of the Senate Crime inquiry in 1951 that forced politicians to give really serious attention to the new medium. A reportorial canvass of television cities indicated that city after city experienced widespread public reaction, virtual paralysis of normal social activity, and direct political repercussions as a result of the telecasts. Jack Gould of The Times reported that "political figures in all sections of the country agreed that no individual running for office could afford to ignore television's influence," while some politicians freely predicted that "the potentialities of television are so great they will revolutionize politics." 67

The Crime Committee telecasts made Senator Estes Kefauver a national hero overnight, and a leading contender for the presidential nomination on the Democratic ticket in 1952. Rudolph Halley, committee counsel, and "on camera for more consecutive hours than any other person in the new medium's short history", received the Liberal Party nomination for President of the New York City Council, and was elected. This did not fail to attract nationwide attention among politicians of both major parties. President Truman was especially impressed with the possibilities of television, insisting on its full use for all of his major speeches. It was therefore no accident that President Truman's address opening the Japanese peace treaty conference

at San Francisco inaugurated coast-to-coast television service. At the request of the Department of State, the transcontinental facilities were placed in operation twenty-six days ahead of schedule.68

The first coast-to-coast telecast went out over the air on September 4, 1951, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the first transcontinental radio broadcast. To insure efficient coverage of the peace conference, the four television networks pooled their facilities, with Sig Mickelson, CBS director of news and public affairs, named to head the project. Originally, only the President's speech and limited portions of the conference sessions were scheduled for network broadcast, but the final outcome was the telecasting of the entire conference. The broadcasts were unsponsored, except on the West Coast where the Richfield Oil Company paid $75,000 for the complete coverage of the five-day event over eleven stations. The networks used a combined staff of more than one hundred people to handle production of the telecast. Radio likewise was much in evidence, and radio coverage was termed the greatest since the United Nations was organised in the same city six years previously.69

One research film rated the television audience for President Truman's address before the Conference delegates at 50.1 per cent of all American television homes, estimating that 14,670,000 persons

69 Loc. cit.
watched the President open the Conference.\textsuperscript{70}

Television made another significant contribution to the political drama of 1951 with the return of General Douglas MacArthur. His arrival on the West Coast was televised over eleven West Coast stations, and viewed by a total of 4.1 million Californians. MacArthur's dramatic address to Congress was carried over a national television network and had an audience of 18.6 million persons in six million homes.\textsuperscript{71}

This was the setting for the election year, 1952, which Bruce Bliven described in an article in Harper's as "the year that television came to politics." It was the year, he said:

when, night after night, you saw General Eisenhower or Governor Stevenson being introduced as "the next president of the United States" to cheering audiences in seemingly identical auditoriums across the country. Before that it was the year when in broiling July people stayed up until the small hours watching the Conventions while complaining steadily that their eyes hurt, that it wasn't worth it, and that they should turn off the set and go to bed; the year when for months on end the central figure on every panel show was Senator Kefauver if it wasn't Senator Taft, and there was no quarter of an hour on television or radio so remote or obscure that it could not command the presence of at least one candidate and very likely six.\textsuperscript{72}

By 1952 television was truly nationwide and there were more than seventeen million homes with tv---four families out of every ten in the nation.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p. 4.

\textsuperscript{71} Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 19, April 30, 1951.

\textsuperscript{72} Bruce Bliven, "Politics and TV," Harper's, p. 27, November, 1952.
The political conventions of 1952

The national presidential nominating conventions have been part of the political scene in America for more than a century. Bryce called the nominating convention "the biggest mass meeting the world knows of." Other observers have been less flattering, one labelling the convention a "colossal travesty of popular institutions." Yet "without it, the presidential system could not be operated," writes Key, adding, "it is difficult to conceive of a practical substitute."

In his opinion, the national nominating convention is part and parcel of the magic by which men rule. It is a great ceremony in which the forms of the expression of the will of the mass of party membership are followed. It is the miracle play from which the hero emerges triumphant to fight the battles of the party. It is a drama played in terms which the simplest spectator can understand and hiss the villain and applaud the hero. That the convention may not, in fact, constitute a precision instrument for gauging and expressing the "will" of the rank and file of the party is, in one sense, immaterial. It works; it arrives at acceptable decisions.

Little wonder then that Broadcasting-Telecasting magazine, in announcing radio-tv coverage plans for the 1952 Republican National Convention in Chicago should say

"The greatest show on earth"—no longer the circus but the passing political parade—will unfold with unprecedented drama and pageantry before the greatest viewing—


listening audience in broadcasting history... With the emergence and growth of television it is perhaps significant that the words "smoke-filled rooms" are passing from the politician's lexicon to the limbo of another age. An estimated 60 million Americans will have a front-row seat at the 1952 conventions.  

Both political parties made much of the fact that their conventions would be wide-open, in full view of the American people—-a significant tribute to the importance they accorded the broadcast media, and television in particular. The conventions were covered "as nothing in human history was ever covered before" and television "used up candidates and delegates so fast that the commentators finally got down to interviewing the ushers, the bakers in the kitchens of the Conrad Hilton Hotel, and—-lowest of all—-each other." Radio Daily commented upon the unprecedented number of commentators, technicians, and producers—-2,000 of them—-on hand to cover the Republican convention; "for the first time, radio and television in total outnumber the daily press, wire services and periodical press."  

While seating capacity for spectators was severely restricted (a maximum of 12,000 could be accommodated in the Chicago Amphitheater), 300 seats were assigned to accredited radio and tv representatives at the Republican convention, and six specially-built radio-tv broadcast

76 Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 25, June 30, 1952.
77 Bliven, op. cit., pp. 27-33.
79 At the GOP Convention, 311 radio-tv organisations were accredited, with staffs comprising 724 radio newsmen and commentators,
booths were erected high in the west gallery above the convention floor. The Republican National Committee was "deeply aware of the value of this modern miracle of mass Communication" and made complete microphone and camera facilities available to expedite coverage of this first convention to be televised coast-to-coast.  

And both radio and television coverage was staggering in extent. The Republican Convention was carried over four television networks, four radio networks, eighty-one non-network stations, ten regional networks, twelve clear channel stations, and five foreign stations. Each network carried from fifty to seventy-five hours of the proceedings. In its coverage of both conventions, one network, ABC, scheduled 313 telecasts of the proceedings, in addition to 442 broadcasts over its radio facilities. Costs were heavy, far exceeding 466 technicians and 681 staff men (producers, directors, etc.). Coverage of the Democratic Convention was approximately the same, with 305 organizations accredited, and a working crew of 721 newscasters and commentators, 468 technicians and 683 production staffers. A total of 900 network personnel were on hand at the two conventions: ABC radio with 141; ABC-TV, 100; GBS Radio, 105; CBS-TV, 149; NBC radio, 201; NBC-TV, 57; NBC-Newsreel, 26; and MBS, 138. Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 24, July 21, 1952.

80 Radio Daily, p. 6, July 7, 1952.

81 Loc. cit.

82 On the Republican Convention alone, NBC-TV devoted 75 hours (65 sponsored by Philco); NBC radio, 50 hours. CBS Radio broadcast 47 1/2 hours of the proceedings in contrast with 68 for CBS-TV. ABC radio and tv each put in 70 hours on coverage, including regularly-scheduled programs relating to convention subjects. Mutual's coverage exceeded 50 hours. Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 36, June 30, 1952.

83 Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 36, June 30, 1952.
original expectations. Counting actual operating expenses and loss of
revenue through cancellation of sponsored programs to carry the con-
vention proceedings, convention coverage cost at least two or three
million dollars more than the eight million dollars the networks re-
ceived for sponsorship of the broadcasts.\(^84\)

The effects of televising the conventions

There was widespread curiosity as to viewers' reactions to the
"big show of 1952" and indices to the size of the viewing audience were
eagerly awaited by broadcasters, politicians and other observers. To
some persons, the audience for convention telecasts was disappointingly
small.\(^85\) As compared with audiences for the top entertainment pro-
grams on the air, programmed against strong competition, the combined
four-network impact was far below expectations, and neither convention
produced any phenomenally high ratings.\(^86\) Considered, however, from the
point of view that the proceedings were a five-day affair, and that

\(^{84}\) Bliven, op. cit., pp. 27-33.

\(^{85}\) In Los Angeles, for example, the top convention rating was
45. "I Love Lucy", a situation comedy-drama, had a 47.0 rating; the
Walcott-Charles heavyweight title bout drew a 52.3 and comedian Red
Skelton a 49.3 that same week. Average nighttime rating of the Re-
publican Convention was only 36.0, and during the day, 13.7. The
nomination of General Eisenhower on the first ballot received a con-
servative 17.0 rating. The 1951 Crime hearings in New York enjoyed
a daytime rating of 34 and leading "entertainment" shows regularly

\(^{86}\) The first evening session of the Republican Convention,
July 7, 1952— a four-network pooled telecast— achieved a rating
of 41 against no competition. Ratings of the top ten regularly-
sponsored network programs in that same week, against strong com-
petition, ranged from 17.6 to a high of 29.9 for Arthur Godfrey's
partisan interest might be presumed to have reduced the total potential audience to either convention roughly by half, the ratings become more impressive. According to one audience research organisation, there were a total of 50,930,000 viewers watching some part of the proceedings during the week of the Republican Convention: 15,906,000 sets in all were tuned to the proceedings, with an average of 3.4 viewers per set. The peak audience was achieved during the keynote address of General Douglas MacArthur to which 21,370,000 viewers in 8,220,000 homes were tuned.87 The Democratic National Convention drew about 25 per cent less audience than did the Republicans, with no more than one-sixth of the potential viewing audience, in some cities, tuned to the convention by the second evening.88 However, the impact of the convention broadcasts was still tremendous, for more people saw at least some part of the proceedings than ever watched any single program in television history.

Press reactions to the televised proceedings were mixed, with some papers ignoring the role of television, others paying glowing tribute to the new medium of information. J. R. Wiggins of the Washington Post wrote: "This Republican convention will be remembered as the first convention of a new era in American politics... Whatever good or evil results... the goldfish bowl and not the smoke-filled room hereafter will be the proper symbol of American political

88 Bliven, op. cit., p. 31.
conventions." The Charlotte (North Carolina) News remarked: "In five action-packed days millions of observing Americans received an enthralling short course in government." The New York Times concluded that "television, in short, gives democracy an all-seeing eye," while the New York Herald-Tribune commented, "the fascination of the spectacle lies in the way it shows the democratic political processes actually at work." 89

The broadcasting industry, as might be expected, was highly pleased with its own efforts. Broadcasting-Telecasting magazine proudly applied the term "Town Hall, U.S.A." to the political conventions, contending that the "combination of broadcast operations... catapulted television and radio into the forefront of news media." The GOP coverage, in five days, "revolutionized U.S. politics," 90 said one editorial. Another, in the same publication, took issue with the criticism of the televised proceedings which followed in the wake of the conventions:

Television was praised or damned for what happened, depending on the politician's stance... The public must wonder whether tv constitutes the new political party, with the GOPs and Demos adversaries in the semi-finals... Television did wield a powerful influence. But any notion that it controlled anything is nonsense... If television has in fact revolutionized the nominating conventions, it has done so only because of its ability to report events as they are. It has not changed those events. 91

89 Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 61, July 21, 1952.

90 Ibid., p. 54.

To many observers, the reaction of the man-in-the-street to the televised proceedings was both enlightening and disturbing. "Is there two Conventions now," one old woman in New York is reported to have said, "I never heard before they had two Conventions." When asked her opinion of television coverage, she replied, "I liked that Convention with Ike, but this one they got now, there's something wrong with it, not so exciting." One New York reporter noted a basic dissatisfaction with the convention delegates on the part of many viewers: "We're as good as those guys ourselves... so why waste our time watching them act like a bunch of jerks." And this prompted him to conclude that "television confronted the ordinary citizen with the very ordinary citizens who happen to be politicians", a factor which he thought might become television's most dynamic asset, shaming the inactive into more active political participation.

On the other hand, there were indications that the law of diminishing returns applies to political telecasts as well as to other forms of public information, and that a saturation point can be reached beyond which public interest may change to apathy and antagonism. Gould of The New York Times blamed the quality of the viewing fare for the relatively low ratings achieved by the proceedings, saying: "It hardly can be denied that many of the proceedings were heavy going. Unrelieved oratory is not ordinarily regarded as the best way of attracting a maximum audience." With the conventions the only

program fare available on radio or tv during most of the day, Gould saw the possibility of increased inertia among the electorate, arguing that "to abuse or overextend the individual's power to absorb any given subject could be as ill-advised as not making sufficient effort to obtain participation."  

*Broadcasting-Telecasting* confirmed this thesis, citing evidence that the "sameness" of the daily proceedings was boring to many listeners and viewers. People called the networks to ask when the regular schedules would return, and during the Democratic Convention "not only were networks besieged, but the Democratic Committee itself heard from fans resenting blacking out of favorite shows."  

Editorially, *The New York Times* took the stand that even these indications of public "impatience" had significance for the future of American politics:  

What has happened this year is, of course, that many millions of people outside the convention hall actually saw what happened there and perhaps realized as they never had before that something was wrong with the procedure. . . . If the conventions survive in their new form of national town meetings with every word audible and every gesture visible they will have to be more efficient and—let us face the fact—more continuously interesting.

The truly important fact, accepted even by the detractors of television, is that millions of Americans did see for themselves what

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went on at a national political convention for the first time. And, according to Burton Marvin, dean of the William Allen White School of Journalism at the University of Kansas, television inspired a feeling of closeness plus a heightened interest in politics never before approached by any other medium, bringing national politics into the home and down to the local community level.96

The 1952 presidential campaign

Broadcasting, and television especially, played a prominent part in the campaign plans of both political parties. In the pre-convention period, the public had been treated to multiple exposure to the voices and faces of presidential aspirants on round tables, panel shows, interviews, as well as in the course of formal speeches. Governor Sherman Adams, chairman of Eisenhower's advisory staff, predicted that radio and television would be highly significant in the campaign since they "have completely transformed the methods by which a candidate seeks public office." The political effect of broadcasting, in Adams' opinion, was to "bring a man's principles and personality much closer to many more thousands of American citizens." Such considerations "naturally" entered into Republic presidential campaign plans, he observed.97

While both parties expected to make the maximum use of television,

96 Burton W. Marvin, "What Will Television Do to Politics, Radio and the Press—and to TV Itself?" The Quill, p. 12, September, 1952.

97 Broadcasting-Telescasting, pp. 1-2, August 4, 1952.
party spokesmen were appalled at the high costs of network telecasts. More than ever before, the $3,000,000 limitation on political expenditures called for by the Hatch Act was a cause for major concern. The national party organization found itself forced to rely upon state organizations to do their own fund-raising, arrange for their own campaign publicity, without the degree of coordination previously possible. State-wide radio networks and local tv stations were utilised extensively to provide supplemental coverage for network "policy" speeches on the national level. Such decentralization of campaign publicity made any accurate estimate of campaign costs next to impossible. One reliable source, however, placed the total cost of the campaign at $32,155,251, although some estimates ranged as high as twenty or thirty millions spent for radio and tv broadcasts alone.98

Audience ratings in the 1952 campaign

In view of the high cost of television time, Republican and Democratic politicians alike developed a sudden interest in audience "ratings". A report in Broadcasting-Telecasting a month before the election noted that "ratings have assumed as much stature as actual attendance at political rallies" and that they "have been scrutinised perhaps just as avidly... by the two political parties as by competitive commercial sponsors."99 A breakdown of comparative audience

99 Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 29, October 20, 1952.
figures for the first ten days of the campaign, shown in Table II, shows the relative success of the two candidates in reaching the public by means of the broadcasting media. Eisenhower, with a simulcast speech over the NBC radio and television networks on September 4th, reached the largest audience to be attracted by either candidate during the period—-2,440,000 radio homes and 5,320,000 tv homes. 100

Probably the most significant speech of the 1952 campaign was that of the Republican vice-presidential candidate, Richard Nixon, on September 23, 1952, explaining his $18,000 political fund. The disclosure of this "fund" had given the opposition forces ammunition for a devastating attack on the integrity of the number two man on the Republican team. The Republicans therefore "were faced with the necessity of distributing one of the most critical messages a political party ever had to put across," and they spent more than $75,000 on radio and television to carry Nixon's story to the American people. The speech was aired on 62 NBC-TV stations, 194 CBS radio outlets and some 560 MBS outlets. Only Oklahoma City and Phoenix were deprived of the live telecast. 101

The results were eminently satisfactory on all counts. On television alone, Nixon had an audience of 9,136,000 families on the 62-station tv network, with a rating of 48.9. Eisenhower, just

100 Loc. cit.

TABLE II

COMPARATIVE AUDIENCES TO CAMPAIGN SPEECHES
SEPTEMBER 1-10, 1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time (EDST)</th>
<th>Network</th>
<th>No. Stations</th>
<th>No. homes*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RADIO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenhower</td>
<td>9/4</td>
<td>9:30-10:00 PM</td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>2,440,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(simulcast)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevenson</td>
<td>9/5</td>
<td>9:00-9:30 PM</td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>1,241,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(simulcast)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenhower</td>
<td>9/6</td>
<td>2:00-2:30 PM</td>
<td>NBC-ABC</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>1,284,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevenson</td>
<td>9/6</td>
<td>9:00-9:30 PM</td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>1,327,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenhower</td>
<td>9/8</td>
<td>6:30-7:00 PM</td>
<td>MBS</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>624,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(local time)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eisenhower</td>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>10:00-10:30 PM</td>
<td>NBC-ABC</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>3,464,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevenson</td>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>10:30-11:00 PM</td>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>1,535,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(simulcast)</td>
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<td>TELEVISION</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stevenson</td>
<td>9/1</td>
<td>1:00-1:30 PM</td>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1,382,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eisenhower</td>
<td>9/4</td>
<td>9:30-10:00 PM</td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5,320,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(simulcast)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>9/5</td>
<td>9:00-9:30 PM</td>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2,956,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(simulcast)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stevenson</td>
<td>9/9</td>
<td>10:30-11:00 PM</td>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2,996,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(simulcast)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: A. C. Nielsen Company as quoted in *Broadcasting-Telecasting*, p. 29, October 20, 1952.

* Figures show homes tuned in for six minutes or longer

** Number of stations not reported
twenty-four hours later, on a different network, but at the same time period and with the same number of tv stations, received only a 27.3 rating. And only a week earlier, Eisenhower, speaking over a 56-station NBC hook-up at 10:45 PM, achieved a 29.0 rating. Senator Nixon's speech was the dramatic highlight of the entire campaign, and ranked fourth in popularity among the top ten tv shows for that particular week.102

Election coverage by the broadcast media

Election returns had long been a staple of radio program fare, and 1952 was no exception to the rule. However, since the 1952 election was the first in which coast-to-coast television was involved, both radio and tv vied with one another to do the best possible job. CBS radio devoted almost fourteen hours to election returns on a continuous basis; Mutual started at 8:00 P.M. and broadcast returns continuously for seven hours as did ABC radio. Mutual, to compete with the AM-TV operations of the other networks, tabulated returns from 187 pick-up points around the nation to keep its listeners abreast of events, and added some 50,000 miles of land-line and special short-wave installations to its regular network facilities. NBC and CBS each used electronic computers to predict election trends for radio and television audiences. CBS-TV had more than 200 newsmen handling election returns in its New York studios, and more than 100 persons

102 Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 72, October 27, 1952.
working on results in its Hollywood studios. NBC kept approximately 300 commentators, reporters, technicians and staff members at work to provide six hours and twenty minutes of radio coverage and six hours of tv reportage—under the sponsorship of Philco. CBS radio and television coverage of the election returns was under the sponsorship of Westinghouse as part of a reported $3 million package which included the convention, a get-out-the-vote campaign, and election-night coverage.

While radio and television went to record lengths to outdo each other in election coverage, financially the broadcast campaign hit a "new, profitless high", according to Broadcasting-Telecasting. Election night expenses for NBC were estimated at $275,000 (including $100,000 in commercial program pre-emptions), while ABC spent between $75,000 and $90,000 for its radio-tv coverage, excluding the loss in program revenue due to commercial pre-emptions.

In all other respects, the efforts of the broadcasting media were highly successful. Over 90 per cent of the television homes were estimated to have received the election returns—an audience of fifty million people. Republican leaders gave broadcasting credit for a

103 Radio Daily, p. 6, November 6, 1952.
105 Ibid., p. 27.
106 Davidson Taylor, director of public affairs, NBC, statement before Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, Subcommittee on
splendid job. Alfred Hollander, radio and tv director of Citizens for Eisenhower, declared: "Even though the Eisenhower headquarters were completely geared to receive communications from every state in the union, the job the networks did far surpassed anything we could accomplish, and our up-to-the-minute reports were obtained almost exclusively by watching the tv screen." Hollander was positive that the impact of the broadcasting media in the campaign was so great that all future campaigns would be completely "regeared" to utilise these media "more fully and more efficiently". "There is no doubt," he told members of the broadcasting trade press, "that the whole concept of advertising and budgets for political campaigns will have to be revised completely." He predicted a revision of the Hatch Act to conform to changed conditions brought about by experience with the broadcasting media. "More and more it becomes apparent," he said, "that the unbiased and impartial presentation of candidates and their views by television leaves little doubt in the voter's mind as to what he wants to do." 108

The role of television in the 1952 campaign received widespread comment among political observers, although not all were as unqualified in their praise of broadcasting as were Eisenhower campaigners.

107 Radio Daily, p. 6, November 6, 1952.
108 Leg. Jit.
Bruce Bliven agreed that television brought politics closer to most set-owners in 1952, but believed "they may regard it as purely a spectator sport, or may feel that merely by viewing the candidates and their friends they have accomplished something." Whether television could reasonably claim any sort of political miracle, in his opinion, depended on its ability to "pry televiewers in large numbers out of their easy chairs and down to the polling place on the corner." 109

Robert Bendiner, political writer for The New York Times credited television with at least three major achievements in the campaign: (1) transforming Adlai Stevenson in three short months from a political unknown to a person of stature, (2) rescuing Richard Nixon from impending disaster in the matter of his private finances, and (3) stimulating more voters to get out and vote. "Nevertheless," he concluded, "there is a feeling in both radio-tv and political circles that television has not yet played, if indeed it ever will, the decisive campaign role that some enthusiasts predicted for it. . . . It is neither qualified nor destined to replace the traditional forms of American electioneering and its active reporting by a vigilant press." Bendiner was insistent that the role of television in politics be considered in keeping with its capacities. Television, in his opinion, can "distill the essentials of campaign debate from the mass of flummery and empty rhetoric," establish a rapport between the public and its political leaders, arouse and sustain public interest in the public

109 Bliven, op. cit., p. 33.
business, and "can give democracy a more intimate feel for its political machinery" than years of civics courses or casual reading of the daily paper, "which should provide justification enough, reward enough and glory enough for any institution."\textsuperscript{110}

**Televised public information since 1952**

Television continued to expand its information function in the three years after the election of General Eisenhower. Radio was pushed farther into the background as television produced a sensational series of history-making "firsts". Under the Eisenhower Administration, the presidential press conference was opened to radio and television for the first time, a Cabinet meeting was televised for the first time, the "Fireside Chat" was revived and given a new informal touch by use of television, and the President has conducted televised interviews with his Secretary of State to bring the public up to date on matters of foreign policy. The extent to which the Executive branch of the federal government has utilized television in informing the public closely parallels the pattern followed by the Roosevelt Administration in the use of radio in the early years of the New Deal. Television, in the thinking of Eisenhower's advisers, is plainly the most effective form of mass communication.

Not so true is this of Congressional opinion, however. Members of Congress collectively have shown no especial enthusiasm for public

information by radio or television. Individual Congressmen, on the other hand, have taken every opportunity to make use of television in their own behalf. The Joint Radio-TV Recording Facilities of Congress, only eight years old, are becoming more popular every year. Created to serve the needs of Congressmen in preparing transcriptions to send to home-state broadcasting stations, and supported entirely by fees charged the legislators themselves, the Joint Facilities have made radio transcriptions or television sound films for approximately 300 members of Congress on a regular basis.\footnote{Radio Daily, p. 6, December 1, 1953.} In 1954, seventy-four Representatives and twenty-five Senators used the Congressional tv facilities regularly in preparing film reports to their constituents for use on stations at home. During the 1954 political campaign, preparation of Congressionally-produced films increased sharply, as did the making of one-minute political spot announcements for use in home-state political advertising.\footnote{Variety, pp. 1, 63, August 11, 1954.} To an alarming degree, Congress has evinced interest in broadcasting for purposes of personal political campaigning, while demonstrating no interest in or responsibility for the use of broadcasting for public information as such.

The 1954 campaign showed other evidence of changed attitudes toward the broadcasting media on the part of politicians. Political speech-making was generally on the decline, being replaced to a large degree by intensive "spot announcement" advertising campaigns over
radio and television. Where speeches were made, television broadcasts were too often regarded simply as a device for insuring news coverage in the press. As radio–tv critic Gilbert Seldes charged, after the election, political campaigners of 1954 seemed to think that "the chief value of television is not to persuade voters, but to get the sensational headlines which persuade voters." To these politicians, the role of television as a medium of public information is either misunderstood or ignored. Their concern was still with getting maximum newspaper space for their policies, and "television was used to force the hand of the headline writers... a sorry situation" in Seldes' opinion, "for the costliest and most persuasive communication engine in the world." 113

Yet politicians across the nation relied heavily upon television in the conduct of their campaigns. In New York State, for example, Republicans spent about 70 per cent of their campaign budget for tv and the Democrats approximately 60 per cent. The picture was similar in most other states. The result was not so much an overall increase in political expenditures as a reduction in the amount of funds allotted to other campaign activities. For example, expanded television usage has just about eliminated the old-time mass political rallies in Madison Square Garden and similar auditoriums, with considerable saving in money normally going out in auditorium rentals and the other expenses attendant upon mass meetings. Newspaper political advertising

was reduced to some degree, while radio budgets were sometimes severely curtailed. The Democrats in New York state estimated that their radio expenditures during the final week of the campaign were only 20 percent of the normal pre-tv figure in a year like 1946.  

In the national sphere, the 1954 campaign produced one of the most extensive political network broadcasts in history. The Citizens for Eisenhower Congressional Committee sponsored a speech by President Eisenhower supporting Administration candidates over 218 NBC-TV stations, 71 CBS-TV outlets and a few DuMont network television stations, plus a 471-station radio network, with an estimated audience of 50 to 60 million people.

The emerging roles of radio and television with respect to politics

From the experience of a decade of television, the respective roles of the different media are beginning to form an observable pattern. In general terms, television plays its most meritorious role by providing the citizen with a sense of participation, of bringing political happenings right into his living room. Radio is still unmatched for speed of communication of news and reports on up-to-the-minute developments. Newspapers are gradually finding their place as interpreters, analysing the event in relation to the whole political setting. Television, in short, shows what is happening; radio

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114 *Broadcasting-Telecasting*, p. 30, November 1, 1954.

115 *Broadcasting-Telecasting*, p. 27, November 1, 1954.
tells what is happening; and newspapers explain why. All three have
distinct and complementary functions in the public information process.

While it is much too early to predict the ultimate effect of
broadcasting upon the political order, there is general agreement that
changes traceable to the influence of broadcasting have been occurring
steadily since 1920. The most striking evidence of such changes, of
course, was that provided by the "Fireside Chat" which brought the
President of the United States into direct, personal contact with mil­
ions of voters and which introduced a new form of political instruction
on a mass basis. The executive branch of government is continuing to
make effective use of the broadcasting medium for its public pronounce­
ments, and as an important agency of Administration policy and public
relations. In the field of political campaigning, broadcasting has
found overwhelming acceptance. Growing familiarity with the medium
of television is demonstrating effectively the need for a wholesale
revision of concepts of campaign techniques. Already some indications
may be noted that this revision is under way. Politicians are divert­
ing an ever-larger share of the campaign dollar to television, with
correspondingly less being spent on such expensive and relatively
limited instruments as the political rally. Candidates make extensive
use of "spot announcements" today, seeking to gain the maximum effect
of repetition and saturation of the audience in much the same fashion
as an advertiser "merchandises" his wares—with striking success.

Even more significant, in the minds of sociologists such as
Bogardus, is the increased interest in conventions as a political device which television has instilled in the American people. And having seen this unfamiliar device in action, the public is forcing reforms in the convention system. Bogardus credits television with a signal achievement, in stimulating a far greater proportion of the public than ever before to follow "step-by-step political procedures," which, he concludes, is "almost certain to change the course of the life of the nation through the development of more interest in politics" and correspondingly, "an increase in the percentage of the registered voters who go to the polls and vote."\[116\]

Broadcasting, both radio and television, has made significant contributions to the store of public information. In the realm of political affairs, especially, broadcasting has greatly increased public interest and participation in politics. Today, in every area of political activity but one---Congress---broadcasting is an accepted part of the political system, granted a position of importance and high esteem by politicians and the public alike. Congress, the branch of government most directly concerned with the voter, still is reluctant to grant official recognition of the new medium as playing any necessary part in the legislative process.

Political experience and theory in the eighteenth century inspired a firm belief in the principle that "in republican government, the legislative authority necessarily predominates."¹ Fear of legislative tyranny contributed not only to adoption of a system of separation of powers in the federal government, but to a diffusion of powers within the legislative branch itself. This was the basis of the decision to provide for a bicameral legislature, and for the system of representation in which one House would be chosen directly by the people, the other by the state legislatures.

The danger of "an aggrandizement of the legislative at the expense of the other departments"² seemed so serious to the founding fathers that they deliberately sought to divide the legislative authority and to fortify the executive, inherently the weaker branch. The strength of the legislative branch resided in its close contact with the people; its members were presumed to have a powerful personal influence among the people owing to the greater intimacy of their relations with the electorate and the popular basis of their election.

² Ibid., Number 49, p. 330.
The President, being farther removed from the people, less well-known, and responsible for administering the laws, could never enjoy the popularity accruing to legislators, in the opinion of the men who created the federal machinery in 1787.

Although there have occurred a number of unforeseen changes in the development of the federal system from the pattern originally envisaged by the framers of the Constitution, in most particulars the relationship between government and the people operated according to plan. For the first one hundred years of American constitutional history, Congress was the dominant agency of government. Wilson, Bryce, and Ford, writing toward the end of the nineteenth century, agreed that Congress was then "unquestionably" the predominant and controlling force, despite any weaknesses it might have had. By 1900, however, a perceptible shift in power and prestige could be noted, and Woodrow Wilson spoke of the "new" leadership of the executive, offering the possibility that statesmanship might eventually replace government by mass meeting. In 1910, according to Galloway, the overthrow of Speaker Cannon dispersed the leadership in the House of Representatives and marked the end of the era of Congressional leadership. From that time on, the tendency was toward increasing concentration of authority in the executive branch. The process accelerated rapidly under the New Deal in the 1930s and

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continued through the 1940s in response to the urgent demands of global warfare and the continuing international crisis in the postwar years. By 1945, the fear was growing in many quarters that Congress would soon become nothing more than a mere "ceremonial appendix to bureaucracy" unless immediate steps were taken to restore the traditional balance of powers among the three branches of government.

Contemporary political scientists, such as Corry, are inclined to regard the "aggrandisement of the executive" at the expense of the legislative branch as the inevitable consequence of the change-over from the "laissez faire" state to the new "positive" state. The growing complexity of government, the tremendous volume of highly technical legislation required in a technical age, and the rapidity with which far-reaching changes occur in modern society demand a degree of speed and efficiency from government which Congress is unable to supply. In many respects, therefore, the legislative function today has become much like the executive function as conceived in 1787, as a check or brake upon an overly-energetic leadership. Originally, that leadership was presumed to come from Congress; today leadership in policy-formation as well as the initiation of specific legislation is the generally-accepted prerogative of the executive.


The reversal of the respective roles of President and Congress has had profound, though often ignored, effects upon the character of public information and upon the manner in which the public becomes informed of governmental activities and policies.

**Congress as the source of public information**

As outlined in Chapter II, the founders of the Republic considered political education of the electorate a primary responsibility of representative government. Since, in their thinking, Congress was the government, this implied the acceptance by Congress of an obligation to take the initiative in informing the public. Under the provisions of the Constitution, likewise, both Houses were specifically charged with the responsibility of keeping a journal of their proceedings and publishing such journals from time to time "excepting such parts as may in their judgment require secrecy." The assumption was that debates in Congress on national issues would ordinarily provide the political education necessary to an informed and intelligent public opinion. The press being the only regular channel of communication with the electorate, it was further assumed that the public would become informed by means of objective reports of Congressional proceedings published in the press. "The principles upon which the difference of opinion arises, as well as the decisions, would then

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6 *United States Constitution*, Article I, Section 5.
come fully before the public," wrote Washington, "and afford the best
data for its judgment."

But the idealistic concept of a harmonious transfer of political
information between government and the governed through the agency of
a neutral press almost immediately proved unrealistic. The prevailing
distrust of all government led eighteenth-century Americans to place
a high premium upon freedom of the press as the cornerstone of politi-
cal liberty. And press freedom only narrowly escaped being press
"license". From the very first, Congress ran head-on into conflict
with the press in attempting to "educate" the public. Whatever al-
trustic motives for informing the citizen may have prompted the think-
ing of political leaders, the more practical concern with self-pro-
tection from criticism soon became uppermost in the minds of most
federal legislators.

After the adoption of the Constitution, the majority of the
papers established in the United States were strongly partisan, filled
with scurrilous abuse of party opponents. Washington's plaintive hope
for full, objective reporting of Congress was rather quickly dashed,
and he is reputed to have retired at the end of his second term chiefly
because of the treatment accorded him by a vituperative press. 7 Even
Jefferson, the most outspoken advocate of a free press, became embitter-

7 George Washington, letter to David Stuart, March 26, 1790,

8 William E. Hocking, Freedom of the Press (Chicago: University
tered by the excesses committed by Federalist editors, and suggested that a few prosecutions of flagrant offenders might help restore "the integrity of the press."\textsuperscript{9} The irresponsible conduct of the press in criticism of governmental policies led to the passage of the Alien and Sedition Laws of 1798; their repeal under popular pressure did little to commend the press to Congress. Hocking remarks that the "foul manners of the nation's early press could not dim its obvious importance."\textsuperscript{10} Such manners, however, can be blamed for the failure of Congress to initiate an affirmative policy of public information and the complete abdication of its information function to the press.

A fundamental antagonism characterized the relationship between Congress and the press throughout the nineteenth century, and persists with relatively little change today. Its basis was inherent in the original concept of freedom of the press, which was essentially "freedom to criticize". The development of the popular press early in the nineteenth century, usurping to a large degree the Congressional function of guarding the rights and liberties of the people, transformed the concept of public information. From political instruction, "public information" swiftly became criticism of government---the embodiment of the concept of "pitiless publicity". The developing "news" concept gave criticism of public officials the stature and dignity of "objective truth" instead of mere editorial opinion.


\textsuperscript{10} Hocking, \textit{loc. cit.}
Although the press has consistently devoted a substantial amount of attention to the reporting of governmental affairs, the element of conflict has long determined what was printed about government. The greater the struggle, the more prominently it is featured. Commonly, journalists consider that a news story has value if it is dramatic, controversial, and possibly unexpected—these elements being the primary ingredients of human interest in external affairs, the essence of "news." Since the formation of a national government, the negative aspects of legislative activities consistently have drawn the attention of the press—the clash of personalities, the rabble-rousing speeches of would-be demagogues, the internal squabbles between Congress and the President, the dramatic but meaningless filibusters, and the sensational exposes of graft and corruption in high places.

Noteworthy though the accomplishments of the press may have been both in safeguarding the interests of the masses and in consistent stimulation of interest in political affairs, neither criticism nor emphasis upon the sensational was calculated to instill public confidence in Congress or Congressional confidence in the press.

In consequence, Congress, theoretically the branch of government closest to the people and the direct expression of the popular will, quite early in American history found it politically expedient to have as little to do with the people as possible, and to be on con-

stant guard against the prying eyes of a presumed hostile press. The common attitude of politicians toward the press was one in which "the reporter was regarded as an impertinent intruder." For the first half of the nineteenth century, statesmen did not invite publicity for their utterances, preferring that they be reported only in the friendly organs of their particular party. Lee, in his History of American Journalism, cites the example of Henry Clay who, upon being told that a reporter for the Associated Press was present in the audience on one occasion, was deeply insulted and refused to go on with his address until the reporter had departed.12

The secrecy tradition and legislative reporting

The foremost advocate of full publicity of legislative proceedings was Jeremy Bentham, writing at the end of the eighteenth century. He opposed secrecy on the grounds that "suspicion always attaches to mystery," therefore the public will invariably distrust the actions of its legislative representatives as long as they act in secret. Therefore, he admonished legislators, "let it be impossible that anything should be done which is unknown to the nation—prove to it that you neither intend to deceive nor to surprise—you take away all the weapons of discontent." In general, Bentham believed that the success of any legislative measure was more certain after it had been widely discussed in the light of day, with the whole nation as an

audience. Only through publicity could the electors act from knowledge; without publicity there would be no purpose in elections "if the people are always obliged to choose from among men of whom they know nothing."\(^\text{13}\)

Even in his native England, Bentham's arguments in behalf of legislative publicity found few adherents among legislators. It had long been a basic principle of parliamentary law that sessions of Parliament should be held behind closed doors and the seal of secrecy applied to all deliberations of this body. As the power of the king waned and that of the people increased, secrecy became less important. "Visitors," i.e., members of the public, were permitted within the confines of the Parliament. But with the rise of the English press, these "visitors" commenced to attend parliamentary debates for the express purpose of noting the statements of the individual Member "that he might be excoriated in the press and punished at the polls." Accordingly, the members of Parliament found it highly desirable to protect themselves from "popular intimidation" by reinvoicing the secrecy rule whenever they deemed it necessary.\(^\text{14}\)

In the United States, wrote Luce, "it was inevitable that just as the common law of England was taken over by her colonies, so the customary law of Parliament should be applied without essential change


in their assemblies. The rule of secrecy thus became an integral part of the basic rules of Congress at its inception. Secrecy prevailed in the proceedings of the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention. In spite of the urging of men such as Jefferson that the public "be informed", the first Congressmen were quite reluctant to open the legislative doors to the public—apparently with good reason. Bates records the fact that the second session of Congress, meeting in Philadelphia in January, 1790, was the scene of one of the worst scandals in all Congressional history. Hamilton's plan for funding the public debt "accidentally" leaked out in advance of its public announcement and at least two Congressmen attempted to capitalise on this information for their own personal gain. The men in question sent fast ships south from New York with instructions to buy up the depreciated certificates of the Continental Congress at the old price before the news of Hamilton's plan could reach the back country and force the price up. The story was revealed during proceedings in the House and the anti-Federalist press had a field day at the expense of the party in power in attacking the financial skullduggery of Federalist legislators. The New York Advertiser reported that Robert Morris would profit by $18,000,000 while another Congressman would stand to gain $9,000,000 out of the funding operations. Before the furor died down, a majority of the Federalist

15 Ibid., pp. 336-37.

members of the new government were implicated in the scandal.

Despite the obvious drawbacks to "public" proceedings which allowed such scandals to be brought out in the open, the House of Representatives had opened its doors to both public and press at the start of the first Congress even though "there existed an honest distrust of the as yet untried experiment of popular censorship over legislatures." The Senate resisted "popular censorship" as long as it could, defeating two motions seeking admission of the public in 1790 and voting down two similar measures the year following, only to surrender in 1794 with the adoption of a resolution for open sessions by a vote of nineteen to eight. Even then, the Senate carefully preserved its parliamentary right to hold sessions in secret, providing that proceedings should be "open" except in such cases "as may, in the opinion of the Senate, require secrecy." And almost immediately the Senate found itself in just such a situation.

The highlight of the 1794 session of Congress was the debate on the Jay Treaty with Great Britain on the rights of neutrals. Dreading public reaction to the treaty, which constituted an almost complete surrender of the "popular" stand on the subject, the Senate reverted to its previous custom of going into secret session. The treaty was debated for eighteen days before finally being approved. Then, anticipating public disapproval of the terms of the treaty, the Sen-


18 Luce, op. cit., pp. 334-35.
ators decided not to make the treaty public. As might be expected, this ill-advised move failed miserably. A Senator opposed to the treaty refused to be bound by the secrecy vote, and gave a copy of the document to a newspaper editor who promptly published it. The consequences were even more serious than the Senate had originally anticipated. Public indignation was immediate and monumental; mass meetings denouncing the treaty were held in every major city. The wave of protest was so strong that Washington hesitated for seven weeks before signing the document, and when he did so brought the wrath of the nation's press upon his own head.

The Federalists essayed their customary propaganda tactics in defense of the treaty, but could not stem the tide of opposition to a government which had temporarily but completely, according to Bates, "lost the confidence of the people." Thus, from the very beginning of national history, secrecy became a bone of contention, with the press contributing to an ever-widening gap in understanding between the public and its elected representatives in Congress.

The precedent for secrecy was well established in parliamentary law, and both custom and practical politics decreed the maintenance of this legislative "right". But when the Constitution was compounded "there was neither precedent nor claim for recognition of the people's rights to news of their government." Bartow reports that "the Journal of the Continental Congress, now by evolution the Congressional Record,

was thought all that was necessary for the curious—an opinion heartily endorsed by representatives of that same period. The Constitution therefore included a provision requiring publication of the journals of the two Houses of Congress—but again specifically excepted those parts which, in the opinion of Congress, "require secrecy."

Under the circumstances, therefore, Senators were unable to understand the basis for the vitriolic attacks made on them in the press following defeat of motions to admit reporters to the Senate chambers. The notion that the general public had any "right" to know what went on in the legislative halls was contrary to the basic tenets of parliamentary law, and foreign to the experience of any of the legislators. But the constantly repeated denunciations of its actions by the press finally persuaded the Senate to reverse its stand and admit representatives of the press to witness its deliberations.

Although by 1794 Congress was open to the press, "Republican

---Bartow, loc. cit.


21 Typical of the attacks in the press is this editorial by Philip Freneau in February 1792: "A motion to open the Senate Chamber has again been lost by a considerable majority... in defiance of intention, in defiance of your opinion, in defiance of every principle which gives security to free men... Are you free men who ought to know the individual conduct of your legislators, or are you an inferior order of beings, incapable of comprehending the sublimity of senatorial functions and unworthy to be entrusted with their opinions?... Can there be any question of legislative import which freemen cannot be acquainted with?... Remember, my fellow citizens... you depend not on your representatives... they depend on you... Secrecy in your representatives is a worm that will prey and fatten upon the vitals of liberty."---Bartow, loc. cit.
and Federalist members of both Houses distrusted the innovation and denounced it as dangerous. The only representatives of the press really welcome in the halls of Congress were those friendly to the administration. Almost exclusively these were the local Washington editors, obligated to the administration by printing subsidies and other patronage.

As late as 1841 the Senate attempted to exclude reporters from its chamber on the ground that its "regulations provided only for the admission of representatives from Washington papers." According to Mott, it was not until 1846 that the restrictions upon out-of-town papers were finally removed, and not until 1860 that relations between Congress and the press were satisfactorily worked out to permit accrediting of correspondents to both Houses on a systematic and equitable basis. By that time, seventy-five reporters were accredited as Washington correspondents, responsible for keeping the nation informed of the news of the nation's capital.

By a strange coincidence, the decline of Congressional debates and the removal of much of the important business of House and Senate to standing committees dates from the middle of the nineteenth century, at almost the same time when verbatim reports of Congressional pro-

22 Ibid., p. 87.
23 Lee, op. cit., p. 222.
seidings were first published on a systematic basis and when the press achieved full "right" of access to the legislative chambers. Woodrow Wilson strongly implied a definite connection between the development of the committee system and the end of secrecy of debate on the floor of Congress. In *Congressional Government*, he charged that, for all practical purposes, Congress had delegated "not only its legislative but also its deliberative functions to its Standing Committees," while "the little debate that arises under the stringent and urgent rules of the House is formal rather than effective... it is the discussions which take place in the Committees that give form to legislation."\(^{25}\)

The transfer of the real work of Congress from the Chamber floor to the committee-room, said Wilson, was due largely to the fact that committee proceedings are private, deliberations unpublished, and "there is no place in the regular order of business for a motion instructing a Committee to conduct its investigations with open doors."\(^{26}\)

In spite of authoritative opinion that the rules of both Houses providing for secret sessions are "long obsolete", each House still retains its traditional right to hold such sessions whenever secrecy is deemed necessary. Committee proceedings in the House of Representatives, furthermore, "having no force until confirmed by the House, are not to be published, according to the parliamentary law." Congressional precedent bears out the contention that "it is entirely

\(^{25}\) *Wilson, op. cit.*, p. 82.

\(^{26}\) *Ibid.*, p. 84.
within rule and usage for a committee to conduct its proceedings in
secret," and even the House itself is not permitted to abrogate the
secrecy rule, except under most unusual circumstances. 27

Yet Congress is not wholly unaware of the dangers of the secrecy
tradition to its press and public relations. The Legislative Reorganis-
lation Act of 1946, adopted by Congress, requires that all committee
hearings be open to the public, except executive sessions for revising
of bills, for voting, or where the committee by majority vote orders
an executive session. 28 Although the press has come to enjoy free
access to Congressional sessions and to committee hearings, the committee
session itself remains inviolate. Through the executive session, the
secrecy tradition is perpetuated; such sessions have developed into
extremely popular devices for the expeditious handling of legislative
business.

The American press, however, persists in its efforts to make all
of the public business "public", constantly striving to prevent Con-
gress from withdrawing further into the shell of secrecy. Advocates
of freedom of the press argue that eternal vigilance is necessary to
halt the spread of the "executive session". They point to the fact
that in 1953, alone, 1,357 "executive sessions" were held by Congres-
sional committees---from which both press and public were barred. Only
a few of these related to matters of national security where secrecy

27 C. A. Cannon, Proceedings of the House of Representative

28 Legislative Reorganisation Act, 1946, Sec. 133 (f).
might be justified. While the volume of legislative business provides legislators with some justification for the use of any procedure designed to increase the efficiency of the legislative process it is not always evident that the public interest is always served by the procedures followed. In fact, there is considerable evidence that the contrary is true. According to V. M. Newton, managing editor of the Tampa, Florida, Morning Tribune:

Much of the legislation conceived and concealed behind the locked doors of the secret congressional meetings was railroaded through Congress with a minimum of public debate and with little opportunity for the restraint of public opinion to be exerted. Some of it did not see the light of public print until it was adopted.29

Data compiled by Floyd M. Riddick, one of the nation's leading legislative experts, show that fewer and fewer bills are being debated in either House or Senate long enough to take up three or more pages in the Congressional Record. From 1940 to 1948, although each House passed approximately one thousand bills each session, there were never more than 124 bills in the House, nor more than 80 bills in the Senate which were the object of any substantial debate on the floor. In the first session of the 79th Congress, for example, 2,189 bills were passed by the two Houses and 2,358 committee reports filed with reference to legislation, but only 120 measures in the House and 66 in the Senate received any degree of consideration. The vast majority of the 658 laws finally enacted in that session were passed without public debate

29 Letter from V. M. Newton, Jr., to Senator Wayne L. Morse of Oregon, Congressional Record, p. 5903, May 10, 1954.
of any kind—an situation which is today the normal course of events. A summary of the relative numbers of bills debated on the floor of either House since 1940, in relation to the total numbers of bills passed, is given in Table III.

In keeping with the recommendations of the Reorganisation Act, the Senate Appropriations Committee, in the 80th Congress, for the first time, held public hearings on all appropriations measures, although its counterpart in the House voted to continue holding its hearings in executive session. All in all, Congressmen today are much less prone to insist upon absolute secrecy than their predecessors of a half century ago. Before 1900 Congressional committees held no public hearings whatever, while now hearings are an "institution". Yet Congress stubbornly resists pressure from the public and the press to eliminate executive sessions altogether both for practical political reasons and in keeping with its ancient tradition.

The basis for secrecy

Walker expresses the opinion of many political theorists, as well as that of the press, in stating that "with the possible exception of debates on foreign affairs in Congress, there would seem to be no


### TABLE III

CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE, 1940-1948*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session, Year</th>
<th>Number of Bills Debated**</th>
<th>Number of Laws Enacted***</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>76th Congress, 3rd session (1940)</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77th Congress, 1st session (1941)</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77th Congress, 2nd session (1942)</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78th Congress, 1st session (1943)</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78th Congress, 2nd session (1944)</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79th Congress, 1st session (1945)</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79th Congress, 2nd session (1946)</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80th Congress, 1st session (1947)</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80th Congress, 2nd session (1948)</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data taken from Floyd M. Riddick's annual reports on congressional business in *The American Political Science Review*, various issues, 1941-1949.

** Bills in either House discussed for more than three pages in the Congressional Record during the session.

*** Includes both public and private laws.
occasion when a democratic assembly should transact any business in secret." The managing editor of The Washington Post and Times Herald, J. R. Wiggins, contends that the basis for legislative secrecy is a lack of confidence in the people and in their ability to comprehend the complicated reasons that compel a Congressman to vote as he does. Even when inspired by the noblest and most practical motives, the real menace to secrecy, says Wiggins, is that this "failing faith in the people... may first deprive citizens of the information essential to sound decisions and then, because their decisions are not sound, deprive citizens of the very right to make them."  

Congressional defense of secrecy stems in part from the Constitutional provision that "each House may determine the rules of its proceedings." This provision was merely the common-sense admission of the fact that "every deliberative assembly must operate under certain recognised procedural rules regulating its organisation, its day to day functioning and its adjournment" in the effective utilisation of the limited time available. As a general principle of representative democracy, it is almost universally conceded that "assemblies shall


34 J. R. Wiggins, "Do Public Officials Withhold the News Because They Do Not Trust the Public?" The Quill, p. 24, November, 1954.

35 United States Constitution, Article I, Section 5.
control their own internal organization and rules of procedure."  

This constitutional right has been upheld by the United States Supreme Court in *U.S. v. Ballin* in 1891 in which the Court ruled:

"The Constitution empowers each house to determine its rules of proceedings. It may not by its rules ignore constitutional restraints or violate fundamental rights, and there should be a reasonable relation between the mode or method of proceeding established by the rule and the result which is sought to be attained. But within these limitations all matters of method are open to the determination of the house, and it is no impeachment of the rule to say that some other way would be better, more accurate or even more just... The power to make rules is... a continuous power, always subject to be exercised by the house, and within the limitations suggested, absolute and beyond the challenge of any other body or tribunal."

Backed by the weight of Constitutional authority and parliamentary custom, Congress has effected changes in its rules only with the greatest reluctance in its 170-year history. At the same time he was arguing for a change in rules to permit legislative broadcasting, Representative Meader expressed the general tenor of Congressional thinking in asserting "the rules of the House should not be lightly amended. They are our Bible of procedure, should be clearly understood by all Members, and ought not to be altered except upon a strong showing that change is required." The result of this attitude on the part of members of Congress has been that the same rules are re-adopted by each House

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37 *U.S. v. Ballin* (144 U.S. 1, 5, 1892).

practically without change year after year, and to a large extent the rules of a century ago still apply in both Senate and House. 39

Retention of the secrecy rule, therefore, becomes less a deliberate effort on the part of House or Senate to restrict public information than the exercise of a well-established right of Congress to run its own business without outside interference. It is an unfortunate effect of the rule-making power in relation to public information that, under parliamentary law, the absence of a rule expressly authorising a given practice is as great an inhibiting influence as is a rule specifically forbidding that practice. Historically, before press or public could be admitted to the Congressional galleries each House had to formally pass a rule to this effect. There was no radio correspondents' gallery in the House or Senate until rules were adopted providing for it. In the interests of efficiency of procedure, the Congress of the United States has unwittingly imposed restrictions upon public information rather than implementing the dissemination of information.

**Congressional failure to "inform"**

Croly reached the conclusion more than forty years ago that "the success of any form of government in which the electorate has positive and active functions to perform depends upon its ability to create a popular interest in its operations and purposes." 40 But, Congress, in


contrast, has consistently and effectively demonstrated a unique capacity for attracting the wrong kind of popular interest. Galloway refers to the fact that Congress, unlike the President or the Supreme Court, has always managed to put its worst foot forward with devastating results to Congressional prestige. This, he believes, "may be due in part to the failure of Congress to acknowledge and develop its own peculiar functions (one of which is public information) and in part to the obscuring of the performance of its solid, essential activities behind archaic forms of traditional parliamentary behavior."41 In its continuing struggle with the press on the questions of access to Congressional proceedings and of public information in general, Congress has generally managed to come out a poor second. Laski likewise emphasizes the restrictive effects of parliamentary procedures in relation to public information, remarking that "it is exceptional for the House of Representatives to win the ear of the nation for its debates; and it must be said in frankness that the House takes all possible steps to prevent itself from being successful in what should be among the most important of its functions."42

The early nineteenth-century notion that the public would become informed of legislative affairs through Congressional debates has long since been refuted by the changes which have taken place in Congress itself and in society as a whole. As Rogers noted a quarter-century

41 Galloway, op. cit., p. 269.
ago, "the printing press, the telegraph, the complexity of governmental business and the power of party organisations have combined in robbing parliamentary debate of its former interest and importance." As a result, he concluded, there is very little education of the electorate by Congress as newspapers pay less and less attention to legislative proceedings. This is not to say that the press ignores legislative affairs, for in general the activities of Congress are reported in a "reasonably adequate and accurate fashion". But Congress is not "presented" to the public in anything like the dramatic manner in which the President and administrative officials are publicised. Herring made this point a number of years ago, adding that the executive branch had devised an elaborate and intelligently planned system for building up a favorable public opinion whereas "publicity" in the legislative branch had been left wholly to chance.

From even a superficial examination of historical developments in the relations between Congress, the press and the public, certain facts emerge. While the federal government was originally presumed to exercise a significant function in the political education of the electorate, Congress from the first years of its existence failed to take any real affirmative action in this regard. The press, in its "watch-dog" role, unintentionally caused Congress to resist publicity


as a matter of political expediency. For a variety of reasons, the
two important educative forces available to Congress—parliamentary
debate—has been allowed to degenerate to the point where it no longer
commands any widespread public interest.

The consequences of Congressional failure to take positive steps
toward the better information of the electorate have assumed alarming
proportions. In 1944, for example, a nation-wide poll showed that
more than a third of the people did not know the name of either United
States Senator from their state. A similar survey in August, 1945,
brought out the fact that 42 per cent of the people did not know the
number of Senators representing their state in Congress. Congress has
so little interest for the average voter that at the beginning of 1946,
a Congressional election year, nearly 70 per cent of the people were
unaware that an election was to be held that year. 45

Repeatedly, other polls show similar results, tending to confirm
the observation of Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois that "there is a
fairly widespread feeling throughout the country that Congress, in
many respects, has lost the necessary touch with the people." 46 Nor
is this, apparently, a new development on the political scene. Dozer,
a historian formerly connected with the Department of State, refers
to a "wide dichotomy between government and people" which has grown


up over the last seventy-five years. The public's lack of identification with its government, he argues, has led to an ever-broadening distrust of government, and widespread reluctance to submit to governmental controls except through coercive efforts or in event of an obvious national emergency.47

The widening gap between Congress and the public has become especially noticeable in the past decade as the United States assumed the role of leader of the free world, with Congress called upon to legislate on matters far removed from the knowledge or experience of the average citizen. The crux of this problem is summed up succinctly by Smith:

The formation of intelligent opinion depends largely upon the ability of the people to get the facts and on the interest they show in them. In the field of foreign affairs, accurate information is often difficult to obtain and public interest is, on the whole, considerably less than in domestic matters.48

Gottrell and Eberhart have even gone so far as to say: "It would appear that a third of the people live in a world that psychologically does not include foreign affairs. As for the other two-thirds, it must be said that at best... only a minority of the people can be considered actively conversant with contemporary world


problems. Lasswell likewise sounds a pessimistic note in remarking that "a very large part of the American people are not actively concerned with national issues," citing as evidence the fact that:

After sixteen months of debate and public discussion, and one month before Congress authorized the Marshall Plan, sixteen out of every hundred American voters had never heard of it. Only fourteen out of a hundred could be called informed, in the sense that they could give a reasonably accurate statement of the Plan's purpose. Although aware of the existence of such a scheme, seventy in each hundred were uninformed.

Public opinion polls invariably show 20 to 40 per cent of the public to be totally uninformed about the major issues of the day. As might be expected, factual information on foreign affairs is particularly lacking from the common store of knowledge. In 1942, several months after the drafting of the Atlantic Charter—and after the Charter had been dramatically presented to the American public by all media of communications—eight out of ten persons had neither read nor heard about the Charter. Only one person in ten could name the "Four Freedoms" that same year, while a considerable number had never even heard of them. During discussion of the formation of a new League of Nations in 1944, more than half of the people in America did not know

that the United States had never joined the old League. A year later, 30 per cent of the public had neither read nor heard about the Crimean Conference, while the purpose and aims of the San Francisco Conference was a complete mystery to a somewhat larger proportion of the electorate whose consent would be vital to the success of American participation in any international organisation. Yet these were matters widely discussed and debated by American political leaders, both in and out of Congress. Obviously, there were grave deficiencies in the information process.

Even domestic issues fail to penetrate all levels of public opinion. In 1949, after extensive publicity and "public" discussion of the Brannan Plan, 57 per cent of a sample of Midwest farmers had not followed the discussion sufficiently to have an opinion on the merits of the plan. It is hardly surprising that only one person in two in America in that year could identify Tito, or knew anything about the Voice of America broadcasts, but more serious is the fact that an even smaller number had any idea of the existence of the Hoover Commission, much less the implications of its recommendations.


53 When the question of a homeland for the Jews was being hotly debated and Palestine was the scene of a small-scale war between English troops and both Arab and Jewish terrorists, fewer than a third of the electorate was even aware that Palestine was under British control. "The Quarter's Polls", Public Opinion Quarterly, 9:95, Spring, 1945; 9:246, Summer, 1945; 9:512, 536, Winter, 1945-46.

for governmental reorganisation.\textsuperscript{55} Not only does the public demonstrate a lack of knowledge of facts, but the language of politics itself is frequently without meaning for the average voter. In 1946, for example, "balancing the budget" was a major campaign issue, but one survey indicated that more than half of the people had no idea what the expression meant.\textsuperscript{56} Three years later, another poll reported that the terms "conservative" or "liberal" were incomprehensible to 40 per cent of the public.\textsuperscript{57}

Many political scientists are prone to cite the results of the polls as evidence of public indifference or political incompetence, without endeavoring to discover why the public is so poorly-informed in a nation placing a premium upon information.\textsuperscript{58} Yet there is considerable data to support the argument that the public is ill-informed, to a large degree, because of the lack of any coordinated program of political education.

Even the detractors of public opinion in the political process

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 13:710, Winter, 1949-50.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 726; 13:558, 544, Fall, 1949.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 14:812, Winter, 1950-51.

\textsuperscript{58} "The writers who did most to discredit the belief that public opinion is the continuous ruling force in the state---Wallace, Lippmann, Lowell, Dewey, and others. . . were concerned on the whole with the destructive work of exposing the fallacies of democratic theory. . . little concerned with the improvement of public opinion. . . Their writings generally imply that popular government is in a deplorable state because of the weakness of public opinion. But they did not. . . delve very far into the problem of how. . . public opinion might be made more effective." Joseph A. Starr, "Political Parties and Public Opinion," Public Opinion Quarterly, 3:436-37, July, 1939.
agree that "people are not apathetic about what they think affects them and what they can do something about." The polls, while indicating an extensive lack of information, at the same time demonstrate that public "ignorance" is not total, i.e., a general lack of knowledge regarding all issues. There is a surprisingly high degree of public awareness or information on certain questions, as to personalities, and even with respect to relatively technical matters touching the daily life of the citizen.

On the other hand, the process of becoming "informed" on any subject in the realm of political decision is conditioned by at least two factors. Information must be available in understandable form, and equally important, the citizen must be in the habit of getting it. Most writers concede the importance of the first point but rarely allude to the second. Both points are emphasized by Vance, stating that on most issues "the news is our thinking", determining what to think about, and what to think about it; whoever selects the news "selects our opinions". No amount of intelligence, Vance intimates, can go beyond the available information, nor can informed judgments

59 Lasswell, op. cit., p. 167.

60 Areas of controversy or general familiarity always command public interest. In 1949, for instance, two out of three persons were familiar with the work of the House Un-American Activities Committee, while 68 per cent of the electorate were well-informed as to Senator McCarthy's charges of Communism in the State Department in 1950. "The Quarter's Polls", Public Opinion Quarterly, 13:164, Spring, 1949; 14:801, Winter, 1950-51.
be expected from a citizenry not in the habit of receiving and using information. 61

By permitting the press to assume the entire burden of public information, Congress indirectly has contributed to the misinformation of the public. "Political education is almost necessarily selective as regards the type of issue lending itself to the process," notes Griffith. Highly technical subjects, noncontroversial subjects, subjects whose importance is confined to a single group—none of these receive much publicity. Differences between the President and Congress, crime, subversive activities, universal military training—all are news-worthy. "In other words," Griffith points out, "the political education resulting from Congressional activity is not only selective, it tends to be disproportionate and distorted." 62 Dependence upon news coverage of its activities by the press has created no habit of Congressional information, no regular and consistent pattern of informing the public on matters of national import. The most singular Congressional action, the most significant debate, is always subject to being relegated to the back pages of the nation's papers or a two-line mention on network newscasts if a popular Hollywood actor becomes involved in a paternity suit, or the Dodgers win a World Series.


For most of its history, Congress has cheerfully abetted this tendency by withdrawing as far as possible from the limelight, throwing up a smoke screen of parliamentary complications that only the professional politician can penetrate. The result has been that the citizen "feels baffled", discouraged about his ability to participate, finally becoming apathetic and cynical, "more and more ready to listen to those who say that democratic politics cannot cope with the confused modern world." 63

Nowhere is lack of information and understanding of government more apparent than with respect to Congress. During the war years, from 1941 to 1945, public opinion polls consistently reported an increasing lack of confidence in its elected representatives. From 44 per cent of the people believing that Congress is "about as good a representative body as it is possible for a large nation to have," in the immediate prewar years, the situation became worse from year to year until in 1946 seven out of ten persons rated the job Congress was doing from "only fair" to "lousy". 64 In spite of the substantial efforts of individual Congressmen to maintain close ties with their constituents through periodic "reports to the people" and other information devices, public awareness of what their representatives are doing is exceedingly limited. One survey shows that while 55 per cent


of the voters knew the name of the Congressman from their district, only one voter in five had followed his work in Congress, and nearly one out of two had paid so little attention to his activities that they could not say whether he was doing a good or a poor job. 65

Even more indicative of lack of confidence in elected representatives were some of the wartime poll results as to which was most often right on national issues—Congress or the people. Replies were divided almost equally between Congress and the constituency as being "right"—42 per cent as against 40 per cent—hardly enough to constitute a real vote of confidence for Congress. When asked whether Congress should exercise its own judgment or vote in accordance with the wishes of the electorate, response was overwhelmingly in favor of following the public will. Two out of three persons felt Congress should obey the wishes of the people. 66

All of this adds up to just one thing: a general lack of understanding of Congressional functions and problems. Much of this lack of understanding can be traced directly to Congressional failure to supply the needed direction to public information necessary to "an informed public".

65 Loc. cit.
66 Ibid., pp. 131-33.
The information function of Congress

Rousseau wrote, "As soon as any man says of the affairs of State 'What does it matter to me?' the State may be given up for lost." On the other hand, without adequate information the citizen cannot reasonably be expected to maintain a very high level of interest in public affairs. As Alexander Hamilton wrote in the Federalist: "a government continually at a distance and out of sight can hardly be expected to interest the sensations of the people."

In the halls of Congress today decisions are being made which "may make or break not only our own nation but also the whole free world." Lack of public information on the nature and implications of these issues contributes to political apathy and indifference on the part of the voter. Congress has done nothing whatsoever to attempt to "interest the sensations of the people", by encouraging political education or assuming any responsibility in this regard.

Yet for nearly three-quarters of a century, references to the "information function" of Congress have cropped up with increasing frequency in the writings of students of government. Wilson regarded the "information function" as more important even than the Congressional


69 Griffith, op. cit., p. 1.
legislative function, contending that "an effective representative body" should not only express the popular will "but also to lead it to its conclusions, to utter the voice of its opinions, and to serve as its eyes in superintending all matters of government—which Congress does not do." Observing that "the most thorough debates in Congress fail to awaken any genuine or active interest in the minds of the people," Wilson in 1885 concluded that Congress had become "divorced from the 'general mass of national sentiment'." It was his contention that only through continuous discussion and debate could Congress faithfully discharge its really vital function of instructing and guiding the people in political affairs.

Higham, a member of the British Parliament, published in 1920 a thought-provoking plea for a forthright assumption of governmental responsibility for information on the assumption that "the wide dissemination of ideas can no longer be left to chance" since "uninformed democracies are the greatest danger confronting modern states." With a perspicacity far ahead of his time, he described public opinion as the "cement that holds the State together," and, as such, should be a great governing factor instead of the mere pawn of the politician. In Higham's opinion, the need for a positive program of government

70 Wilson, op. cit., p. 296.
71 Ibid., pp. 184 ff.
publicity was indisputable:

Democracy left to judge complicated matters without guidance, or the latest data, or the most trustworthy information, given to it in tabloid form, is like a great ship without steering-gear on the high seas. Public opinion... if it is invaluable... must be galvanized and educated; become, as far as is humanly possible, fully informed. At present, we are simply drifting. We have a democratic theory of government... and a thoroughly autocratic neglect of the judgment of those people whose will we contend is all-powerful. 73

Writing at approximately the same time, Luce, without modifying his stand in favor of secrecy of executive sessions in the legislative branch, maintained that "a legitimate function of Congress or Parliament is to develop and disseminate information on questions of widespread public interest." 74 As government became increasingly complex, and the volume of legislation correspondingly greater, the question of public information arose more and more often. In the evolving concept of the "positive" state, government publicity as a legitimate function of modern government found support among students of public administration, especially as this function applied to the problems confronting municipal government. Although the seeds were planted which would later bring forth a more general recognition of a Congressional information function, the notion was very slow to catch the attention of the majority of political scientists, not to mention the legislators themselves. In the minds of most writers,

73 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
74 Luce, op. cit., p. 349.
the negative philosophy of publicity as a means of control over government remained uppermost until the mid-thirties at the very earliest. Even the small but growing body of opinion which favored government-sponsored public information did so on the grounds that private agencies no longer served the public interest, but had become vested interests in their own right. As one of the leaders of this group, Dewey urged greater governmental responsibility for political education, arguing "there can be no public without full publicity in respect to all consequences which concern it," while warning that "whatever obstructs and restricts publicity, limits and distorts thinking on social affairs." By slanting news and editorial selection, the press, in Dewey's opinion, used its facilities for political propaganda rather than information.

But the majority of political and social scientists either ignored or minimized the information function of Congress. Influenced by the purely pragmatic thinking of the public opinion "experts", they tended to view any effort toward increasing the supply of public information with the utmost skepticism. Almost to a man, the leading authorities on politics and government have echoed Lippmann's pessimistic appraisal of information and public opinion. Lippmann conceded "the need in the Great Society not only for publicity but for uninterrupted publicity is indisputable" but argued that "we shall

misanterstand the need seriously if we imagine that the purpose of
publication can possibly be the informing of every voter.\footnote{76}{Walter Lippmann, The Phantom Public (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 43.} For it was Lippmann's conclusion that:

The individual man does not have opinions on all public affairs. He does not know how to direct public affairs. He does not know what is happening, why it is happening, what ought to happen. . . there is not the least reason for thinking, as mystical democrats have thought, that the compounding of individual ignorance in masses of people can produce a continuous directing force in public affairs.\footnote{77}{Ibid., p. 39.}

Just such thinking as this, coupled with the Congressman's natural aversion to unrestrained publicity, accounts in part for the long-delayed recognition of a Congressional obligation to "inform".

But the rapid march of events in the past two decades has produced many changes in political thinking, not the least of which has been a more militant attitude toward democratic government. More serious attention began to be devoted to measures designed to offset or strengthen the weaknesses of democracy. At the end of World War II, the United States found itself in the unexpected position of leader, banker and political adviser, as well as military protector, of the free nations of the world. American democracy became the design for newly-established republics in various parts of the world; the success of the American system became the major weapon in the struggle for democratic survival. The ever-widening sphere of governmental activ-


\footnote{77}{Ibid., p. 39.}
ities evoked a wholesale reappraisal of governmental functions by students of government. Congress, in particular, became the focus of attention. As the agency of government most in need of reform, as well as the branch of government called upon to make the decisions affecting half of the globe, there was no gainsaying the importance of Congress as the prime example of democratic government in action. Practically speaking, the information role of Congress is still undetermined, but it is highly significant that in the years since the end of World War II the existence of a Congressional information function has received tangible recognition by substantial numbers of politicians and political theorists. Griffith, in consequence, was able to state without fear of contradiction that "the political education of the public is one of the recognised functions of Congress." Griffith, in consequence, was able to state without fear of contradiction that "the political education of the public is one of the recognised functions of Congress." Griffith, in consequence, was able to state without fear of contradiction that "the political education of the public is one of the recognised functions of Congress."78 Hocking has expressed the same thought in asserting that "it is beyond doubt that press conversations with the public is a legitimate function of government."79 In many quarters, the information function is rapidly becoming an integral part of democratic philosophy. But beyond agreeing with Laski that the public "ought to be educated by its legislative assembly" and "able to look to it for leadership and understanding,"80 few political scientists today have felt it necessary to elaborate on the nature and exercise of this legislative function.

78 Griffith, op. cit., p. 170.
79 Hocking, op. cit., p. 190.
80 Laski, op. cit., p. 731.
The most concrete expressions of Congressional responsibility for public information stem from three main sources: legislative experts closely associated with Congress, a small minority of Congressmen, and persons especially concerned with the social and political aspects of the communications media. Of these, Galloway, one of the outstanding authorities on Congressional organization and procedure, has probably devoted more time and attention to the study of the information function than the majority of contemporary writers. He calls representing and informing the people the "third great function of Congress"---a function which, in his opinion, is becoming increasingly important with the decline of Congress as the original source of legislation. The "teaching function" of the Congressman, says Galloway, is one of the major responsibilities of the legislator, it being his "duty" to instruct his constituents on the "nature of national problems and to explain his own actions in committee and on the floor." The Subcommittee on Rules of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration conducted extensive hearings in 1954 on the question of rules of procedure for Senate investigating committees. In its Report published at the conclusion of the hearings, the Committee set forth the "principle" upon which current thinking as to the information function is based:

81 Galloway, op. cit., p. 275.
82 Ibid., p. 316.
The "informing", as distinguished from the "legislative" function of Congress is implicit in the committee system itself. Committees investigate in order to inform themselves, Congress, and the public, of conditions and events that are of public concern. . . The public must have the facts if legislation is to command public understanding and support. . . Without facts there can be no intelligent debate in Congress or in the public forum. And facts, to be useful, must be communicated. Clearly, therefore, the informing function of Congress cannot be separated from the legislative. 83

The need for Congressional action

More recognition of a Congressional informing function is not enough to insure that the public will be informed thereby. In view of the deplorable lack of knowledge of legislative affairs among members of the electorate, it would seem obvious that something more than simple "cooperation with the press" is required in the present situation. Whereas Congress has taken no initiative in publicizing its activities, the executive branch has made the fullest possible use of the mass communications facilities for publicity of administration policies and proposals. The advent of radio and television has only accentuated the effect of these widely-divergent policies toward public relations. Although Congressional "news" is extensively reported in the press and over news broadcasts, Congress as a whole has no "voice", no means of getting its policies before the people except through routine news channels. The President, on the other

hand, holds regular press conferences, makes frequent policy speeches, and has a full-time publicity staff to insure that "the authoritative touch" between President and people "be immediate and unbroken".\(^8^4\) The White House press conference has come to be regarded as "the most significant news source in the world."\(^8^5\) Policy speeches of the President receive not only routine news treatment by the agencies of communication, but are carried in full over the national radio and television networks. Furthermore, the news facilities of the nation's press, and time on the air, are instantly available for any important announcement the President may care to make. Congress necessarily suffers in prestige if only because of its inability to establish direct contact with the public.

Justice Frankfurter once defined democratic government as "the government which accepts in the fullest sense the responsibility to explain itself."\(^8^6\) Although the executive branch has accepted this responsibility, it is somewhat ironic that the branch of government presumed to be closest to the people has shown itself unwilling to shoulder the burden of public information. The evidence is overwhelming that the public is largely uninformed as to legislative affairs, and has little understanding of the operations of the legis-


\(^8^5\) George L. Bird and Frederic E. Merwin, op. cit., p. 469.

\(^8^6\) Felix Frankfurter, "There Is No Middle Way," *Saturday Review of Literature*, p. 21, October 26, 1946.
lative branch. The dangers inherent in this situation were pointed out seventy years ago by Wilson who said: "No more vital truth was ever uttered than that freedom and free institutions cannot long be maintained by any people who do not understand the nature of their own government." To an alarming extent, this would seem to be an apt summation of the present problem confronting the United States today.

History demonstrates conclusively that governments, peoples, ideas, which fail to keep pace with changing events and circumstances soon disappear. From the time of the economic crisis of the Depression, democratic government in America has been shaken to its foundations by a rapid succession of events. The clash between the democratic and communist ideologies, accompanied by the ever-present threat of an atomic war between East and West, forces many competent observers to the conclusion that the pattern of government for some time to come will be that of the garrison state, of crisis government. Such is the theme elaborated by Lasswell in National Security and Individual Freedom, in which he sees the undermining of the press and public opinion as one of the most insidious effects of government expansion and of continuing crisis. He concludes that the ultimate outcome is the abject surrender of democratic ideals and institutions to the requirements of "national security", unless prompt action is taken to revitalize the democratic process. Congress is especially vulnerable,

87 Wilson, op. cit., p. 58.
says Lasswell, since a continuing crisis favors the rise of the executive branch at the expense of the legislature.\textsuperscript{88} The responsibility for the maintenance of democratic institutions rests with Congress, but even Congress will be helpless to resist the pressures of crisis government, Lasswell asserts, unless every possibility for informing the public is explored and utilized to the fullest extent possible.\textsuperscript{89}

There is an even more impelling motive for Congressional action in informing the public. In its new capacity as the acknowledged leader of the western world, the United States has undertaken grave responsibilities. The implications of a single error of judgment during this period of international tension are frightening to most thinking Americans today. While more and more responsible students of government question the efficacy of public opinion in determining matters of policy in such perilous times, their doubts cannot change facts. And it is an incontestable fact that "the ignorance of the people will control affairs if their enlightenment does not."\textsuperscript{90} As long as citizens hold the right to vote, the question is not whether public opinion is competent or incompetent, but whether or not the voter has been given at least the basic facts necessary to an intelligent decision. And this is within the power of Congress to do, if it so chooses.

\textsuperscript{88} Lasswell, \emph{op. cit.}, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 126-27, 168-69.
\textsuperscript{90} Thomas A. Bailey, \emph{op. cit.}, p. 151.
Proposals for a Congressional public relations program

Even before World War II had ended there was growing demand for Congress to take the initiative in informing the public. In the course of hearings preceding the passage of the Legislative Reorganisation Act and in the public discussion of proposals for modernising Congress in the immediate postwar period, the need for improving Congressional public relations was strongly emphasised. From a variety of sources have come suggestions for the adoption by Congress of a forthright public relations program. The Commission on Freedom of the Press, for example, strongly recommended that Congress, instead of attacking the publicity activities of administrative officials (as it had done so vehemently during the New Deal era) might well emulate them with an information service of its own. "Many purposes come to mind which can be promoted through governmental information," observed the Commission, not the least of which would be providing "models of discussion." Especially valuable in the eyes of the Commission would be the presentation by Congress of lucid summaries of its activities on a continuing basis, so as to give the citizen an intelligible account of the process of lawmaking.91

Galloway suggested as one possibility the creation of a "public relations department" in the legislative branch designed to dramatise the role of Congress. This could be useful, he thought, in making

issues mean something to people and by presenting them in such a clear
dramatic way as to make citizens realise that their own interests and
welfare are involved." 92

The Legislative Reorganisation Act, as finally enacted, dealt
only with procedural matters, the internal handling of legislative
business. Public information received no mention, nor were any pro-
cedures established for the exercise of the Congressional information
function beyond the requirement that committee hearings be "open".
It is significant, however, that the majority of the proposals for
an affirmative policy of Congressional public relations make specific
reference to the utilisation of radio and television to establish
closer contact between Congress and the people. Leigh, director of
the Commission on Freedom of the Press, told members of the Joint
Committee on the Organisation of Congress (the LaFollette-Monroney
Committee) in 1945 that "Congress now suffers in relation to the
President and to the executive chiefs because it has no adequate
access to the radio." 93 He then outlined a comprehensive public
relations plan built entirely around broadcasting of Congressional
debates and committee hearings. Subsequently, in 1951 and again
in 1954, Congressional committees held hearings on reorganisation


93 Robert D. Leigh, statement before the Joint Committee on
the Organisation of Congress, Hearings: Organisation of Congress
in which testimony regarding legislative broadcasting to a considerable degree dominated the discussion. Beyond acknowledging that such testimony had been presented, however, the committee reports as ultimately released included no recommendations for implementing a Congressional public relations program.

The objectives of public information

While there are indications that Congress has a growing awareness of its need for more effective communication with the voters, even more strongly evident is the lack of understanding of the true nature of the information problem. In most quarters, information is regarded in its traditional "publicity" sense, as a means of control over government. The role of information as an affirmative means of political education is usually overlooked. Yet most political scientists are in essential agreement that the era of the "positive state" has wrought important changes in government. The expanding areas of governmental activities ought logically to have been accompanied by an expanded concept of public information, but such has not been the case.

By far the majority of writers on politics and government are wont to use the term "information" in the restricted sense as "unorganised facts or data"—the raw material of political policy formulation. Noting, in consequence, that the public "is not particularly well-informed about the specific issues of the day", the selfsame

94 Berelson, op. cit., p. 318.
writers customarily adopt a thoroughly pessimistic view of public opinion. Much of the current literature on public opinion reflects an underlying assumption that only through the possession of an unlimited quantity of factual information can the citizen ever be said to be "fully informed," and unless "fully informed" he cannot participate intelligently in the political process.

But such an assumption does not take into account the nature of modern politics. At no time in history have politicians ever been so unrealistic as to assume that the average citizen could possibly assimilate all the facts on all matters of public policy. This is even more evident today where the multiplicity and complexity of governmental activities taxes the abilities of legislators to perform their task intelligently. The realistic legislator is more inclined to agree with Powell that "the possession of much information does not lead automatically to the correct answers," and "the value of factual information as such is easily overrated."95

As practical politicians, Congressmen are today more concerned with insuring public understanding of the legislative task and the broad issues involved in the formulation of public policy than with supplying the citizen with all the facts pertinent to the making of policy. The theory of representative government presupposes the delegation of legislative policy-making to popularly elected repre-

sentatives. The compromise between representative government and popular government which constitutes the American political system has given rise to many misconceptions as to the relationship between legislator and constituent. One of the most perplexing misconceptions is that involved in the "informed public" ideal. At first thought, there is little difference between information and understanding. Information is ordinarily assumed to form the basis of understanding, so both are generally conceived as components of the same thing. But modern politics has greatly expanded the meaning of the terms, while modern psychology offers evidence that information does not necessarily produce understanding, nor does understanding necessarily require full knowledge of the facts.

Insistence upon full information tends to obscure the primary issue involved in the problem of public information: the objectives of information in the political system. Under the prevailing conditions confronting government and society today, the need is no longer for the maintenance of the negative philosophy of distrust implied by the emphasis of the press upon incessant and uninterrupted publicity. The requirement of democratic government in a technological age is very simply expressed by Starr as follows:

The need for political education has become more imperative. . . . A present-day government must deal with many complicated problems which are difficult of comprehension by the average politicians or by more than a small fraction of the voters. The greatest danger to democracy is that the issues to be decided from day to day may become too difficult for the average man to understand. If the voters cannot understand what the government is doing, there is little possibility that they may participate in, or control
the government in any way. A government that is incomprehensible to the common citizen becomes in due course either a bureaucracy or a dictatorship. The obvious preventive is the development of a specialised adult education designed to help voters to comprehend matters of state.96

More and more, the Congressional information function is being conceived as a positive requirement of political education—a much broader concept than the simple transmittal of factual data. Griffith, in his book Congress, published in 1951, devotes an entire chapter to Congress and to the political education of the public which he describes as "one of the recognised functions of Congress."97 The objective of political education is understanding of the political process so as to make intelligent participation possible. From the standpoint of the legislator, political education gives the public a greater appreciation of his efforts, and presumably helps insure his reelection once understanding is assured. This is essentially an optimistic approach, assuming that the legislator has nothing to hide.

But political education of the electorate is subject to most of the same obstacles which have stood in the way of previous efforts to inform the public with news and other factual data. The problem has been variously defined, with most authorities agreeing that "to know anything about government, you must see it alive". This was the gist of McConachie's hope for some means of "legislative extension" which

96 Starr, op. cit., p. 442.

would permit people to see at first-hand the operations of their government in action. Elihu Root observed, before World War I, that "it is the process of government that educates for government," and this fact has remained the unattainable goal of educators ever since.

Then came television and for the first time in history the major obstacles to political education seemed removed. The recommendations for a Congressional public relations program since World War II have been tied almost exclusively to the use of radio and television by Congress. The principles in support of this "legislative broadcasting", stating Congressional objectives and expected benefits, were outlined in detail before the House of Representatives by Congressman Meader early in January of 1955:

First, television and radio broadcasting, although new, have already established themselves as effective means for the transmission of news.

Second, self-government by citizens through elected representatives can work successfully in modern, complex society only if, first, the electorate is well and accurately informed about the public business; and second, the performance of their elected representatives is well known to the voters.

Third, under our Constitution, the policymaking or legislative authority of the Government is vested primarily in the Congress.

Fourth, the executive branch of the Government, under the Constitution, has a part in policy formulation through recommending measures and through the power of veto. As a practical matter, however, the bureaus and departments have a far greater influence on the character of legislation than the American public realises.

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Fifth, in the context between the executive and the legislative branches of the Government over the relative influence of the one or the other in the formulation of national policy the sympathies and the support of voting citizens is controlling. To preserve the constitutional power and prerogatives of the Congress in policymaking, the respect, the understanding, and the support of the public is necessary.

Sixth, familiarity with the problems of the House of Representatives, the manner in which they are met, the functioning of committees in the process of enacting laws, plus acquaintance with the individual members of the House, all will lead to the sympathetic knowledge and understanding on the part of the American public, so necessary in upholding the legislative prerogatives of the House.

Seventh, of all the media for the transmission of news, first-hand observance through live or recorded television and radio broadcasting is the most powerful and effective. Through them the functioning of the House of Representatives can be brought into the homes of the American people in a way never possible before. Through television and radio, government can be brought closer to the people.

Eighth, if we deny the American people the opportunity to witness the Congress in action first-hand . . . we will prevent the electorate from becoming as well informed on public issues as it would be if it could observe them through television and radio broadcasting. The House of Representatives will suffer in public notice and consequently in public esteem. . . With the executive branch of the Government. . . continually in the limelight, the House, if it excludes itself from the public gaze, will be relegated to a position of inferior importance in the public regard.

The overall benefit to society as a whole was summed up by Representative Brownson of Indiana, as follows: "Today, we have the technical means of allowing millions of people to know their Government by seeing it alive . . . As their knowledge of their Government increases,

their willingness to accept fully the responsibility of citizenship increases."100

The tremendous potential of broadcasting as an educative force is well recognized. Broadcasting, and television in particular, assumes a transcendent role in the political purview, once the objective of public information is interpreted primarily as understanding of government rather than knowledge of facts upon which political decisions may be based. The latter, important as they are, are secondary to the basic understanding of the legislative process itself. Without such understanding, no amount of factual information will enable the voter to participate effectively in the political process. As Earl McGrath, then United States Commissioner of Education, told educators attending the 1953 Institute for Education by Radio and Television, "Nothing less than a continuing education through mass media can provide the type of understanding among our people that will be needed if they are to live effectively in the evolving social life of their times." Television can play a significant and unique role in providing this education, according to McGrath, since "as vast and varied as this is, television offers to all citizens that sense of participation in

100 Representative Charles B. Brownson, debate on the floor of the House of Representatives, Congressional Record, p. 597, January 26, 1955.
public discussions and decisions which was enjoyed by the limited
citizenry of the small Greek city state of centuries ago."101

101 Earl James McGrath, "The Opportunities of Education thru
the Mass Media," Education on the Air, 1951, O. Joe Olsen, ed.: 23rd
Yearbook of the Institute for Education by Radio and Television, Ohio
State University (Columbus, O.: Ohio State University Press, 1953),
pp. 24-26.
The question of the desirability of legislative broadcasting is nothing new in the annals of government or broadcasting. Almost from the birth of radio, the potentialities of the new medium became the subject of speculation by Congress as well as other groups interested in political education. But it was not until the end of World War II that legislative broadcasting entered the arena of serious public discussion. The debate over Congressional reorganization from 1945 to 1951 introduced the idea of broadcasting as a means of improving Congressional public relations. And in 1951 the televising of the Kefauver Crime Committee hearings evoked a spontaneous public demand for more televised information of government.

At the same time, so many new aspects of the problem of Congressional broadcasting were revealed in the course of public discussion that the basic issue became lost in a welter of confusing and contradictory arguments. After more than three years of debate, the only obvious conclusion which can be drawn is that, with regard to legislative broadcasting, nothing is obvious, or can be left to chance. Even the most superficial evaluation of the legislative broadcasting idea is affected by the many complex factors involved in a seemingly simple decision to broadcast Congressional proceedings.

Involving Congress as it does, the question of legislative
broadcasting constitutes a political problem subject to many of the same considerations common to other political issues. The "public interest" in more information conflicts sharply with legislative concern with internal efficiency, self-protection, and party politics. Furthermore, as the historical relationship between Congress and the public bears out, the information function is still so little understood by Congress that it alone precludes ready acceptance of any plan for broadcasting of Congressional debates or committee hearings.

In analysing the considerations which will determine the ultimate usefulness of the broadcasting medium in legislative affairs, several things must be kept in mind. First, there is a major distinction between "information" in the broad educative sense and "information" used for purposive political instruction. Routine coverage of legislative affairs is unspecific as to objective and requires no special method of handling. Political instruction, on the other hand, implies a high degree of organisation and planning, with specific goals to be achieved. Second, there is a significant variation in the types of information available, depending upon the source. Legislative debates provide one kind of information; Congressional hearings another. Each source poses special problems, requiring individual consideration and treatment. Still a third factor affecting the final decision as to legislative broadcasting is the eternal conflict between political theory and practice. What should be done, in the opinion of legislative experts, is subordinate to what is likely according to the
dictates of practical politics. Constituting, therefore, a political problem, Congressional broadcasting must depend, in the final analysis, upon finding a political answer, i.e., the best and most acceptable compromise among several alternatives.

With these points in mind, and the historical basis of public information established in preceding chapters, it is possible to explore the feasibility of legislative broadcasting in a practical political context, while still giving consideration to theoretical principles of democratic government.

Congressional broadcasts as part of the information function

Traditionally, Congress provides two main avenues for "informing" the public: the debates on the floor of House and Senate and the public committee hearing. In theory, the Congressional Record is the instrument by which Congress reports directly to the people on actions in the two Houses. Practically speaking, no one would seriously contend that the Record has much utility in this regard. To an even lesser extent, published committee reports serve as vehicles of public "enlightenment". Public information of legislative affairs, as pointed out in earlier chapters, has been almost wholly dependent upon the coverage accorded to Congress by the press. Only by procedural subterfuges restricting the amount and accessibility of information is Congress able to affect the content of the information received by the public. Accordingly, political instruction of the electorate never assumed a very important part in Congressional thinking on the
subject of public information. However, the recent emphasis upon the
need for a Congressional public relations program built around the
effective utilisation of radio and television imparts a somewhat
different character to the traditional concept of the "informing
function" of Congress.

The change in thinking with respect to public information is
especially noticeable in the specific purpose ascribed to Congressional
broadcasting proposals during the past several years. Cherington, for
example, states that no better plan has been proposed to break down
the growing insulation between the people and their chosen repre­
sentatives than the broadcasting of proceedings and debates of Congress.\(^1\)
In wholehearted agreement, Doser contends that "the advantage of such
broadcasts in promoting an identity of interest between the people
and their government cannot be over-estimated."\(^2\) The use of television
to reduce the gap between Congress and the public figures far more
prominently in the discussion of legislative broadcasting than does
its use simply to "inform".

Griffith's analytical study of Congress\(^3\), although making no
reference to Congressional broadcasts, provides one of the strongest

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1. Paul T. Cherington, "Our Freedom and Our Opinions," Public


3. Ernest S. Griffith, Congress: Its Contemporary Role (New
arguments in favor of using television in the exercise of the Congressional information function. He emphasizes the radical changes which have taken place with regard to the role of Congress, noting in particular Congressional efforts to take a constructive part in the formulation of international policy. Treaties have become less important; appropriations more so. Increasing participation in international affairs requires heavy expenditures to support far-reaching policies. To be successful, such policies require "a deep, underlying solidarity in popular support—a solidarity which Congress can develop as well as register." Even more significant in Griffith's opinion is the virtual disappearance of the conventional concept of leisurely deliberation and prolonged debate, with legislative decisions being made only after achieving a consensus of public opinion. The present age of crisis demands prompt action on the part of government. A declaration of war, the most serious action of any state, can no longer be debated at length and submitted to the exacting test of public opinion before Congress can act. A world in which an atomic war may be begun and ended in a matter of hours leaves little room for conventional methods. Speed of communication of the important facts concerned with momentous issues has become paramount in the atomic age.

The necessity for speedier communication between government and all of its citizens gives broadcasting a transcendent importance to

4 Ibid., p. 89.
the political future of America. As Herbert Hoover, then Secretary of Commerce, told the Third Annual Radio Conference in 1924, "for the first time in history we have available to us the ability to communicate simultaneously with millions of our fellow men, to furnish entertainment, instruction, widening vision of national problems, and national events." One need only to recall the tremendous effectiveness of Roosevelt's Fireside Chats in explaining government policy at critical moments during the depression years to appreciate the significance of speed and simultaneity of broadcast information. With television, speed in communication is coupled with an enhanced sense of public participation in governmental decisions—the literal fulfillment of Professor MoConachie's dream of fifty-five years ago of "legislative extension."

MoConachie predicted that if some such device for disseminating information could be found, "calumny and misrepresentation might not so often and so strongly fasten upon those who are really faithful," while in the halls of Congress "the better man would come to the front."

Oratory, lost in the infancy of the House, would revive; the voice of the individual member in warning peal or matchless advocacy might fill the land and traverse the seas. . . Individual and party responsibility for every measure could be fixed beyond doubt, and the suspicions of the people could give way to confidence and pride in that branch of the government which stands nearest to them.6


Lest these predictions seem unduly optimistic it should be remembered that television has already made one part of McConachie's prophecy a reality. There is even some basis for arguing that the future role of Congress in the democratic scheme depends in large measure upon its expansion of the information function to make effective use of the newest and most dramatic of the mass media—television.

**Attributes of legislative broadcasting**

Televising the proceedings of Congress will answer the urgent need for rapid transmission of essential information required of "crisis" government in the atomic age. Where time permits, television effectively may augment existing publicity channels in presenting more complete discussion of national issues. Galloway stresses the value of Congressional debates on television to serve as the spearhead of a Congressional program of public information. He recommends extensive procedural revision to permit the scheduling of regular "public national debates" on major issues, to be broadcast to the nation at large.7

Even without any basic changes in Congressional procedure, Dahl of the Yale Institute of International Studies sees considerable merit in a series of televised "Great Debates" on American foreign policy, followed closely by local discussion and debate in thousands of small groups throughout the land. He believes that televising legislative

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debates may hold the answer for resolving the problem of an intelligent approach to foreign policy. Further, Congressional broadcasting, in his opinion, may well revitalize the "town-meeting aspect of democracy" which "has all but vanished from American life." 8

Senator Wiley urges Congressional study of the methods by which television might be used by Congress, foreseeing possible benefits in legislating by television in the event of atomic attack upon the nation's capital. 9 Advocates of legislative broadcasting make reference to a multitude of attributes television has for public information, but none has the strength and appeal of the simple argument that television can enable the citizen to "see his government in action".

Several years ago a writer for a popular magazine raised the question whether history might not have taken a different course had the American people been fully aware of the manner in which the League of Nations was receiving consideration in the Senate. Legislative broadcasting, said this author, might have produced a different outcome. 10 Gould, commenting on the televised opening of the United Nations Security Council in 1950, stressed the powerful impact of televised proceedings.


in giving the viewer at home "an extraordinary insight into history in
the making" as well as sensing at first-hand "the personal equation in
the evolution of events."\footnote{11}

No one would suggest that legislative broadcasting will solve the
ills of democratic government, or do for Congress what Congress will
not do for itself. The arguments thus far advanced for broadcasting
Congressional proceedings are limited almost exclusively to the
reasonable results which might be expected in terms of increased public
information and the creation of a more favorable climate of political
interest and opinion in regard to Congress.

The historical development of legislative broadcasting proposals

Proposals to broadcast Congressional proceedings very nearly
antedate commercial broadcasting itself. On February 27, 1922, in fact,
a resolution was introduced in the Sixty-seventh Congress providing for
the "installation of radiotelephone transmitting equipment for the
purpose of transmitting the proceedings and debates of the Senate and
the House of Representatives."\footnote{12} After two years in which no action
was taken the subject was reintroduced, this time in the Senate. The
Senate resolution called for investigation of the problems in connection
with equipping the Senate chamber with transmitting and receiving
equipment to enable each Senator to "hear clearly at all times" the

\footnote{11 Jack Gould, "Televising Congress," The New York Times,
section II, 6, August 6, 1950.}

\footnote{12 Congressional Record, p. 3130, February 27, 1922.}
proceedings of the Senate, plus whatever "additional equipment necessary for broadcasting by radio of the proceedings of the Senate throughout the country" over War and Navy Department radio stations. The original measure provided that the House be so equipped, as well as the Senate, but this provision was deleted, and the amended resolution limited to Senate broadcasts was then passed by that body.13

Only after repeated prodding by the distinguished author of the resolution, Senator Howell of Nebraska, was the requested investigation conducted and a report returned to the Senate---four years later, in the Seventieth Congress. The Army and Navy radio experts found too many insurmountable technical obstacles in the way of installing broadcast equipment in the Senate chambers. As to broadcasts of Congressional proceedings over radio stations operated by the armed services, the military broadcasting experts patiently pointed out that the Army and Navy were not in the public broadcasting business, and their stations were not equipped to handle such a monumental task and were not of sufficient power to do the job adequately. They estimated it would require the purchase of 23 broadcast transmitters for the purpose, mostly of high power, and that the total cost, including salaries, network lines and other operational expenses would amount to three and one third million dollars. Needless to say, the report was pigeon-holed.14

13 Congressional Record, pp. 7666-67, May 2, 1924.

Notwithstanding the adverse report by the armed service experts, Senator Dill promptly introduced still another resolution in 1928, proposing that the Senate be wired for broadcasting its proceedings. He argued that the cost estimates of the Army and Navy experts were unnecessarily high, since there was no need for a special network of government-owned and operated stations. Here, for the first time, was the recommendation for the utilisation by Congress of existing commercial-station facilities "as may be possible... without expense to the Senate or the Government." This proposal, too, was doomed to failure, as was an identical measure introduced by Senator Dill the following year during the Seventy-First Congress.

In December, 1931, Senator Howell returned to the fray, introducing a new resolution seeking only the appointment of a committee to investigate the feasibility of broadcasting Senate proceedings. Two years later, in 1933, Senator Dill took his turn by placing Senate Resolution 29 into the legislative hopper. Substantially the same measure he had previously introduced in 1926 and 1929, it met the same fate as all of its predecessors—dying in the committee without being reported out on the floor.

15 Congressional Record, p. 933, January 4, 1928.
16 Ibid., p. 343, April 23, 1929.
17 Ibid., p. 217, December 9, 1931.
18 Ibid., p. 415, March 15, 1933.
Other matters occupied the full attention of Congress for the next several years, but the masterful use of radio by the executive branch led to a revival of interest in the subject of legislative broadcasting. Senator Pittman of Nevada tendered Senate Resolution 93 for consideration, proposing yet another investigation of the advisability of broadcasting Congressional proceedings. S.R. 93, however, had two features which distinguished it from earlier proposals. In the first place, it called for investigation of the advisability of having special radio frequencies assigned to Congress for the purpose of legislative broadcasts. Second, the purpose of Senator Pittman's proposal was openly political. Contending that the press regularly published misrepresentations and untruths about Roosevelt and the New Deal, he hoped that radio might be used to advantage in making certain that the facts were being reported fully and accurately to the public. Admitting that he had always opposed Congressional broadcasting in principle, he was careful to point out that he was not recommending any such course of action but was merely asking for a committee investigation. 19

For the next six years, from 1939 to 1943, there was no apparent interest in the question of legislative broadcasting, for there is no evidence that any formal proposals were made in Congress during the entire period. But in 1943 and after, Congressional broadcasts found

19 Senator Key Pittman of Nevada, remarks on the floor of the Senate, Congressional Record, pp. 2196-97, March 15, 1937.
support in a new quarter. Labor and farm groups, especially those located in the western half of the United States, began agitating for legislative action to put "Congress on the air". The Union for Democratic Action is credited with having initiated the proposal, with support from industrial unions in Washington and California rapidly forthcoming. In 1944 the National Farmers Union, the Conference of Industrial Organisations, the American Federation of Labor, the Writers War Board, the National Planning Association, and various other organisations went on record favoring Congressional broadcasting. Popular magazines devoted feature articles to the subject, and at least one broadcaster, Nathan Straus, owner of WMCA, an independent radio station in New York City, announced that his station was prepared to broadcast the sessions of Congress "if, as and when the House and Senate permit a pick-up of their proceedings." Public opinion polls indicated that 51 per cent of the public favored Congress spending the money to build a radio station in Washington, D. C., to broadcast Congressional debates, with only 40 per cent opposed. The vote ran in the opposite direction, however, when people were asked whether they would be willing to pay a tax to support such a Congressional broadcasting station. But a majority of the respondents agreed that if Congressional debates were broadcast there would be


21 The New York Times, Section II, 5, September 17, 1944.
considerable interest in them and people would listen.  

In response to the wave of popular interest in the idea of broadcasting the proceedings of the national legislature, identical measures calling for Congressional broadcasting were introduced in both Houses: in the Senate by Claude Pepper of Florida and in the House by John Coffee of Washington. Both bills died with the end of the session, but they were promptly reintroduced in the Seventy-Ninth Congress. Again they died in committee. The significant feature of the Pepper-Coffee resolution was that it specifically authorized commercial stations and the radio networks to broadcast any proceedings from the floor of either House, if the broadcasters so desired.

Putting Congress "on the air" received careful consideration during the course of hearings conducted during 1945 by the LaFollette-Monroney Joint Committee on the Organisation of Congress. Witnesses testifying before the Joint Committee offered a wide variety of suggestions for the improvement of Congressional efficiency and procedures—among them a number of legislative broadcasting proposals. Broadcasting suggestions ranged from one extreme to the other, from the establishment of government broadcasting stations to be used almost exclusively for Congressional broadcasts, to measures such as the Pepper-Coffee resolution which merely gave commercial broadcasters


23 Pollack, op. cit., p. 62.
"authority" to broadcast Congressional proceedings. At the request of
the Committee, the Federal Communications Commission and each of the
four radio networks submitted plans for handling legislative broad­
casts. The Federal Communications Commission, at that time, favored
government short-wave stations and estimated cost of construction of
two Congressional stations and broadcasting facilities in the Capitol
building, plus operating costs, at nearly three million dollars. No
action was taken on any of the plans submitted, however.24

The next six years, from 1946-1951, were important ones for the
broadcasting industry, for during this period television made its
debut on the American scene and demonstrated its tremendous potential
for public information. In 1950, the televising of sessions of the
United Nations Security Council gave the American people a dramatic
insight into the problems of international organization and world
peace. In the following year, the Senate Crime Investigating Committee
spectacularly made the public aware of the devious political operations
of the underworld and the far-reaching influence of organized crime,
by means of television. Both events were highly dramatic examples of
legislative broadcasting at its best—from the standpoint of popular
interest. And these samples whetted popular appetites for more of the
same; once again public and Congressional interest in legislative
broadcasting developed. Significantly, however, since 1951, proposals

24 Ralph M. Goldman, "Congress on the Air," Public Opinion
to broadcast the proceedings of Congress itself, and the possibilities of the use of radio for legislative broadcasting, have received little consideration. Television had made the average citizen aware of the Congressional committee and the televising of committee hearings has dominated the discussion of legislative broadcasting.

The failure of legislative broadcasting to secure acceptance

During the entire twenty-eight years of intermittent discussion and debate on the merits of legislative broadcasting prior to 1950, the one major factor which kept discussion of the issue alive was the use of radio by the President. The continuing struggle for power between the legislative and the executive branch gave proposals for legislative broadcasting their main force. This was particularly true during the depression years when the personal prestige of the President threatened totally to eclipse Congress in the public eye. Under the New Deal, presidential publicity by means of radio reached its all-time peak, and Congress sought in every way possible to counteract the powerful influence of the "radio President". Actually, Congress had experienced similar frustrations much earlier than 1933, watching President after President secure the lion's share of the publicity in their addresses before joint sessions of Congress.

The chain of events began on December 8, 1922, when President Harding's address to Congress was broadcast over the naval radio station at Anacostia and relayed to thousands of listeners in all
parts of the country. This was the first occasion of its kind to be broadcast. Only a year later, on December 6, 1923, President Coolidge made the first broadcast from Congress over network facilities, with six stations linked together to carry his speech as far west as Kansas City and Dallas. These broadcasts, in effect, established a precedent for legislative broadcasts, although that fact was wholly ignored by the press. However, Coolidge's speech received widespread acclaim as the start of a new era in politics. "No competent estimate was obtainable last night of the number here who heard the message broadcast," stated The New York Times, December 7, 1923, "but there was no discoverable instance of a person equipped with a receiving set who did not use it for the purpose." And on the following morning The Times commented editorially:

These instruments of communication may have a tremendous influence upon the functioning of national democracies. They will also bring the President nearer to the people. . . . A good radio voice may come to be as valuable an asset as ever was Mr. Bryan's silver speech. The voice of the people will probably be responsive as never before to the voice of the President, for that voice has literally as never before the ear of the people.

Had this been an isolated instance, the question of Congressional broadcasts might never have arisen. But Coolidge went on the air just four days later with the first broadcast from the White House; then

27 Ibid., p. 12, December 8, 1923.
the Coolidge inaugural was broadcast on March 4, 1925—constituting
the greatest radio triumph recorded up to that time, according to
Gleason Archer in History of Radio. A coast-to-coast network of twenty-
one stations from Boston to San Francisco carried the inauguration
ceremonies to an estimated fifteen million listeners. The intensity
of the project, Archer noted, "staggered the imagination of thought-
ful observers"—many of whom were undoubtedly Congressmen. The magic
of radio brought the President himself into the homes of America to
talk personally of national problems—a circumstance which, in
Archer's opinion, "could not fail to revivify interest of the common
people in the affairs of government."28 The broadcasting of the
presidential inauguration gave impetus to the proposals already made
for legislative broadcasting, as this excerpt from an editorial in
Radio Broadcast magazine for May, 1925, indicates:

We hope that soon Congress will be forced to broadcast its
activities. Verbose Senators may have their activities
somewhat rationalized and sobered if they realize that
secret chamber procedure is no longer available to them.
Not very many of them would care to vote in the affirmative
to increase their own salaries immediately after the
President had outlined his economy program—that is, they
wouldn't care to if they knew that a few million of their
constituents were listening carefully to their words.29

Two years later, in 1927, Coolidge again made headlines with the
first nation-wide broadcast from the halls of Congress. His Washington

28 Gleason L. Archer, History of Radio (New York: American

29 Radio Broadcast, p. 37, May, 1925 (quoted in Archer, supra,
p. 355).
birthday address before a joint session of the Senate and House was
carried by 42 stations of the new National Broadcasting Company network
and reached the "largest audience which has ever listened to a President
of the United States."30

By 1928 the pattern was already well established. The President
had taken advantage of every opportunity to utilize the broadcasting
medium for his major addresses to Congress. Microphones had been
brought onto the floor of the House of Representatives on at least
three occasions. A precedent for legislative broadcasting existed as
Senator Dill reminded his colleagues in his 1928 proposal for the
broadcasting of Senate proceedings:

Radio stations have broadcast the inaugural address of a
President. Only recently the House of Representatives
had a movietone taken of its opening, and anyone who saw
the audiences watch and listen to the results of that were
profoundly impressed. The interest of the American people
in the proceedings of the National Congress will be tre-
mendously increased and public opinion will be clarified
and strengthened in regard to this body.31

Possibly more indicative of the prevailing attitude toward legis-
lative broadcasting in 1928 are the reasons given by the New York
Herald-Tribune for its support of Senator Dill's proposal: "not that
we consider the windy outpourings of the average Senator of sufficient
importance to warrant their broadcasting from ocean-to-ocean, or that
we think the public will find the day-to-day proceedings of that

31 Congressional Record, p. 933, January 4, 1928.
solemn body particularly instructive or entertaining," said the Herald-Tribune, "but it is not the effect on the listeners we are thinking of but the effect on the senators themselves." The editorial concluded by crediting radio with the power of eliminating the "ranter" and of braking oratorical impulses.

There is no evidence that prior to 1932, legislative broadcasting received any substantial support either in Congress or among the general public. If the Herald-Tribune editorial is indicative of the general attitude of the press, Congressional broadcasts were upheld primarily as means of regulating Congress, instead of being conceived as the exercise of the affirmative information function of a legislature. It is little wonder, then, that Congress would receive broadcasting proposals with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm.

During the 1930s the real pattern of Congressional thinking on the subject of legislative broadcasting began to emerge. It became increasingly obvious that Congressmen viewed broadcasting as a tool of politics. Legislative broadcasting proposals were advanced, not for the general education of the electorate, but to further partisan objectives. In the early years of the New Deal, with both executive and legislative branches controlled by the Democrats, Congressional broadcasts were proposed by New Deal Congressmen as a means of countering anti-New Deal arguments in the press. Once the Republicans secured

control of Congress and the battle lines were drawn in the contest between the executive and legislative branches of government, legislative broadcasting proposals had as their inspiration the desire to give Congress the same publicity advantages then enjoyed by the President and the administrative agencies. The Congressional information function was almost completely obscured by the more pressing demands of the immediate political situation.

Once Congress accepted the harsh reality that presidential leadership was part of a basic trend in modern government, wholly apart from partisan considerations, Congressional thinking on the subject of legislative broadcasting underwent a gradual change. By 1940 it was obvious to the most stubborn legislator that Congressional prestige and power was at low ebb. The war years from 1941 to 1945 offered Congress few opportunities for building prestige or regaining public confidence. With the death of President Roosevelt and the approaching end of the war, public attention shifted from the President to Congress in 1945 as interest in postwar plans mounted. The voters looked to Congress for answers to the multitude of problems the nation would have to face in the coming years---international organisation, reconversion, employment, veterans' benefits, rehabilitation of Europe. Popular interest in Congressional debates inspired the Pepper-Coffee resolution, the text of which provides an excellent summary of the "new", non-partisan approach to public information in 1944-45:

Whereas during the coming months and years most of the major social, economic, and political issues of the United States
and of the world will be debated by the Congress of the United States; and

Whereas the interests of every citizen are vitally affected by these proceedings and their outcome; and

Whereas there has been mounting public interest throughout the country in the proceedings of the Senate and the House of Representatives; and

Whereas the proceedings of the Senate and the House of Representatives are of necessity presented only in brief extracts or summaries by newspapers and news broadcasters, with the result that issues and the stands taken by Senators and Representatives are frequently misunderstood; and

Whereas radio broadcasting makes it possible to bring the proceedings of the Senate and the House of Representatives directly to the people of the United States; Therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

That radio broadcasting stations and radio broadcasting networks are hereby authorized to broadcast any proceedings on the floor of the Senate or of the House of Representatives: Provided, however, That no station or network shall be required to broadcast any proceeding, nor shall any proceedings of either House be broadcast when such House otherwise orders. . . 33

Representative Coffee, co-sponsor of the resolution, contended that the public in 1945 needed to be educated upon questions of "vital moment to the nation and to the world more now than at any time in American history." Hence, the purpose of the bill was to "enable broadcasting of such debates as occur on matters of national and international importance," so that during discussion of "lend-lease legi-

33 Representative John M. Coffee of Washington, statement before the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress, op. cit., p. 324.
lation or the treaty considerations affecting the Nation and the world, the public should be permitted to listen in, if they desire."\textsuperscript{34}

Most of the testimony presented in support of Congressional broadcasts before the LaFollette-Monroney Committee in 1945 reflected a growing awareness of the value of a non-partisan approach to public information and recognition of Congressional responsibility to keep the public informed. The hearing testimony indicated, however, how far the average Congressman was from full understanding of the implications of legislative broadcasting for political education. Arguments presented to the Committee were based largely upon the inadequacy of press coverage of Congressional affairs, especially in the more distant parts of the country. Congressional broadcasts were seen merely as an extension of press coverage, to provide a greater quantity of news.

None of the witnesses appearing before the Committee in 1945 presented a clear-cut program of action or indicated any specific benefits to be gained through broadcasting the proceedings of Congress. There was no serious consideration of the content of such broadcasts, nor any evidence presented that Congressional proceedings would constitute good radio program fare. The testimony was characterized by a lack of definition, by an air of vague indecision. The Committee heard the testimony and expressed considerable interest in the pos-

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., pp. 324-26.
sibilities of Congressional broadcasting. But when it submitted its report to Congress, legislative broadcasting was absent from its recommendations, and the one real hope for Congressional recognition of its informational responsibilities went glimmering.

The shift of attention from radio to television

Within a year after the LaFollette-Monroney Committee concluded its hearings, the drive for radio broadcasting of Congressional proceedings came to a standstill as popular attention shifted to television. From 1946 on, it became increasingly apparent that radio would no longer be a significant factor in the final determination of Congressional policy on legislative broadcasting.

Television arrived on the postwar scene to the accompaniment of a tremendous popular ovation in response to televised coverage of the opening sessions of the United Nations Security Council at Hunter College in New York City. The telecasts were carried over a single station, WNBT in New York, and could not have been viewed by more than a few thousand set-owning families. But the event was hailed by the press and by the broadcasting industry as one of the most momentous occasions in history, and popular interest in this novel form of reporting was greatly stimulated in areas far beyond the range of the station.

On January 3, 1947, the opening of the Eightieth Congress was televised, and for the first time in history a Congressional event was thus broadcast pictorially. The impressive ceremonial was carried over a five-station network to viewers in Washington, Philadelphia
and New York. Only some of the House ceremonies were televised, however; the opening of the Senate was not carried. The telecast received an enthusiastic response from Congressmen. Representative Charles Halleck of Indiana told television reporters he thought that the presentation of Congress to the American people was "mighty fine." The newly-appointed minority leader of the House, Sam Rayburn of Texas, congratulated those "who brought television in and those who are conducting the proceedings under it now," saying "it is a great occasion for me, and also for the people out there who will hear and see." But the most glowing tribute of all was that expressed by Representative Charles Wolverton of New Jersey who said: "This new and unique system of conveying news to the people of this nation I consider one of the most outstanding events that has ever happened in the field of communications."35

Legislative telecasting captured the popular fancy and broadcasters moved swiftly to take advantage of the situation. Only three days after televising the opening of Congress, President Truman's message to Congress, delivered before a joint session of both Houses, was televised. Promptly Senator Pepper of Florida took occasion to introduce a new Congressional broadcasting measure, the first to include broadcasting and telecasting of House and Senate proceedings. On March 12, 1947, Truman once again addressed a joint session of Congress, with television cameras focussed on the proceedings, while in November of that same year

his "Relief to Europe" message was also televised. This address, again before a joint session, was broadcast worldwide by radio, and telecast to viewers along the entire Atlantic seaboard. Interest in this form of government "publicity" was growing rapidly as more and more set owners were brought into the "charmed inner circle" of television network coverage.

In 1948, the shift of attention from radio to television was carried further. From a total of approximately 100,000 television sets in use in 1947, the number increased to 864,000 by the end of 1948, while half of the nation, geographically, was brought within the range of network television. The impact of the new medium made itself felt upon politics in that year. The political nominating conventions were held in Philadelphia that year, primarily because of the availability of television coverage. And for the first time, television "covered" the election, usurping radio's exclusive role in this regard.

The year 1948 has special significance with reference to legislative broadcasting, for it was in this year that the television cameras were trained upon the participants in a Congressional investigating committee hearing—the Hiss-Chambers hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Television carried the dramatic story to the nation's viewers, devoting twenty-one days to hearing coverage.

The extensive television coverage together with the "play" given the Hiss-Chambers case in the press, made the hearings the major news story of 1948. But most important, television made the public fully aware of an integral part of the legislative system—the Congressional investigating committee. Ceremonial events such as the inauguration of presidents, the opening of Congress, and even Congressional proceedings suddenly palled before the drama and suspense of committee hearings.

The information value of Congressional committees

The committee system has been an integral part of the legislative machinery since the founding of the Republic. Every bill introduced in either House is referred to a committee for deliberation. Only after approval by the committee to which a bill has been referred is it reported out on the floor for consideration by the entire assembly. As remarked in an earlier chapter, the growing volume of legislation which must be considered by Congress has resulted in a decreasing amount of debate on individual pieces of legislation. Many measures are not debated at all, but passed solely on the committee's recommendation. Riddick points out that the committee chairman exercises a large measure of control over legislation, being responsible for managing the floor debate on measures approved by his committee, for getting committee amendments adopted, and for seeing that the measures receive favorable action. Ordinarily members of the House and Senate defer to the committee's decisions with the result, according to Riddick, that "the committees
are actually little law-making bodies." Since "bills usually pass Congress in much the form they are approved by the committees," the standing committees are powerful creatures of Congress, occupying a position of strategic importance in the legislative process.

In the performance of its legislative and policy-making functions, Congress relies heavily upon the power to investigate any matter of public concern. All of the regularly constituted standing committees conduct investigations relating to subject matter of legislation referred to them, although ordinarily investigations are entrusted to special "select" committees created for that specific purpose. Such investigations are roughly of three types, according to Senator Bricker: legislative, supervisory, or informing. The legislative investigation is related to bills pending before a particular committee, while the supervisory investigation merely exercises a "watchdog" function over certain types of activities. Bricker describes the third type of investigation as one the primary purpose of which is to inform the public, any legislative by-product "being remote or purely incidental."

While there is considerable doubt in the minds of many persons as to the legality or the propriety of any such committee, there is ample


38 Ibid., p. 3.

historical evidence to substantiate the usefulness of committee investigations to inform Congress and the public. Since the first Congressional investigation in 1792, seeking to fix responsibility for the defeat of General St. Clair by the Indians, more than 800 inquiries have been conducted by standing committees or select committees of the House and the Senate. Most of these were carried on during the last thirty years, with an all-time high attained during the Eighty-Second Congress when 236 investigations were authorized. During Roosevelt's first term, there were no fewer than fifty-one investigations by Congressional committees, all widely publicized as part of the deliberate effort to marshal public opinion behind administration proposals. Senator Hendrickson told Senate Rules Subcommittee members in 1954 that the majority of all Congressional inquiries had as their purpose the influencing and informing of public opinion. But, in the opinion of Senator Ives of New York, "the American public was not fully aware" of Congressional investigations until the "broad coverage recently given such investigations by radio and television" stimulated public interest. He emphasized the influence of television in this regard:

The medium of television in particular has brought the participants in congressional investigations into the living

40 Senator Robert C. Hendrickson of New Jersey, statement before the Subcommittee on Rules, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, ibid., Part 2, Ill.


42 Hendrickson, loc. cit.
rooms of American homes and has produced the intense interest
and concern which American citizens have expressed with
respect to the conduct of such investigations. The names,
faces, and actions of those participating in these widely
publicised proceedings have become household words throughout
the country.43

Congressional experience with broadcast hearings

Under the rules of each House of Congress, each committee may
make its own rules governing its internal procedures. Likewise, in
theory at least, each committee may determine its own "publicity" role.
It may hold public hearings or it may not. It may permit, or even
invite, broadcast coverage, or it may exclude broadcasters entirely.
There are certain differences between Senate and House in the amount
of individual latitude which may be enjoyed by their respective com­
mittees, but fundamentally, the decision to "publicise" its activities
rests with the committee itself.

But, in February, 1952, the Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn,
exercised his parliamentary authority to ban radio and television
coverage of House committee hearings entirely on the grounds that the
rules of the House would have to be amended before such coverage could
be permitted, committee rules notwithstanding. In spite of protests
from some members who regarded the Speaker's action as an invasion of
the committee privileges, the decision of the Speaker remained firm.
One year later, the broadcast ban was rescinded by the new Republican

43 Senator Irving M. Ives of New York, statement before the
Subcommittee on Rules, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration,
ibid., Part 1, 43.
Speaker, Joseph Martin, only to be reimposed by Rayburn when the Democrats returned to power in 1955. The issue of televising committee hearings seems obviously to have become a political football in the House of Representatives, to be decided on the basis of partisan advantage rather than public interest in the outcome.

Even without the political implications of the so-called "Rayburn ban", individual committee chairmen have viewed the question of broadcasting differently. In some cases, a single day in a series of hearing dates might be singled out for special publicity by radio and television at the request of the committee, or certain testimony restricted or received only in closed "executive" sessions with edited transcripts released to the press at the close of each day's hearing. Some committees have opened their doors to broadcasters on a basis of full equality with the press; others have never permitted their hearings to be broadcast.

On the whole, the list of televised hearings is longer than might be expected, and constitutes an imposing record of television accomplishment in the field of public information. At first, before network facilities were available, some hearings were reported by newsreel cameras and the "edited" newsreel films broadcast over television stations. But such treatment failed to elicit any significant public response. The appeal of live, on-the-spot, unrehearsed, testimony became apparent early in television history. And from 1948 to 1952, live coverage of Congressional committee hearings increased rapidly.
Prior to the imposition of the Rayburn ban in 1952, hearings of four House, five Senate and three joint committees had been shown on the nation's television screens.44

A compilation of broadcast coverage of Congressional hearings prepared by the Legislative Reference Service shows 23 days of televised hearings in 1948, 21 of which were devoted to the Hiss-Chambers hearings alone, with two days devoted to the hearings on universal military training. In 1949, the report indicates only 12 days of telecasting, all relating to the investigation of the B-36 bomber program. Hearings on the atomic energy program from May 26 through July 11, 1949, were also open to television, but the exact dates on which hearings were televised are not shown in the report. There were at least 34 days of hearings carried on television in 1950, mostly in connection with the State Department employee loyalty investigation.45

The real impetus to televising of Congressional committee hearings resulted from the series of hearings before the Senate Special Committee to Investigate Organised Crime in Interstate Commerce, better known as the Kefauver Crime Committee. Hearings were held in nine states from February 23 to June 22, 1951, and were televised locally on a total of 28 hearing days, on at least eight of which the hearings likewise


45 Legislative Reference Service, "References to Congressional Committee Hearings Televised or Photographed by Newsreel Cameras and Committees That Have Restricted the Use of These Media," Congressional Record, pp. A2961-62, May 8, 1952.
received national network coverage. Also during 1951, hearings were featured on television on approximately fifty other occasions.

The Kefauver Crime Committee telecasts

Whatever questions may have existed as to public interest in televised hearings were definitely settled following the Crime Committee hearings. By means of a pooling arrangement, all four television networks carried the New York hearings for two to three hours a day from March 12 through March 21, plus another two hours on March 24th from Washington, D.C. The key station of the National Broadcasting Company, WNBT, New York City, carried a total of 32 hours and 25 minutes of hearing testimony over-all, and this was probably equalled by other major stations in the New York area. The impact of the telecasts was astounding, even to men in the television industry. Committee members were deluged with mail, congratulating them on the investigation and the telecasts, and asking for more of the same. The over-all total of mail and telegrams received by the Committee amounted to approximately 30,000 pieces, according to reliable estimates, and over half of it favored continuance of television coverage. In Philadelphia, a survey by the American Research Bureau revealed that two-thirds of all television sets in use on March 20th were tuned to the hearings during the three-hour telecast, with an estimated total of

46 Unpublished data compiled by the National Broadcasting Company for use in this study.

47 Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 57, April 2, 1951.
831,600 viewers in that city alone.\textsuperscript{48}

In New York, the hearings almost literally brought business to a standstill. Special audience ratings showed tremendous gains in viewing during the hearings, with ratings reaching 34.3 during some afternoon hours. At certain stages, the proceedings captured 100 per cent of the television audience. During the appearance of Ambassador William O'Dwyer, former mayor of New York, New York television ratings jumped to nearly twenty times the normal average morning figure.\textsuperscript{49}

Three theaters in New York and one in Albany carried the telecasts.

Press tributes to television coverage were extravagant in their praise for their new competitor. The Washington Post ran three editorials on television coverage of the hearings in less than two weeks. The New York \textit{Herald-Tribune} called the program "unprecedented" and termed it the perfect combination of information and entertainment. The \textit{New York Times} called the television inquiry the "major phenomenon of our time,"\textsuperscript{50} while radio-TV critic Jack Gould commented:

\begin{quote}
The city has been under a hypnotic spell, absorbed, fascinated, angered and amused. It has been a rare community experience. . . . In television there has been the means to make the story come alive in the minds of millions. . . . Through the medium of the camera's perceptive eye the individual has had a liberal education in government and morality. . . . What television has done is to provide the implementation for the goal of Senator
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 68.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p. 61, March 26, 1951.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 72.
Kefauver's committee... The power to elicit this public participation is a priceless asset at a time when democracy is facing one of its severest tests... The last week has demonstrated with awesome vividness what television can do to enlighten, to educate and to drive home a lesson. It will take the best efforts of all of us to see that TV truly rises to its own opportunity. 51

The Committee members were highly impressed with the success of their experiment and Senator Tobey called the television contribution "the most wonderful reporting of an event I have ever known." 52

Estimates of the total viewing audience for the Kefauver hearing telecasts vary widely. One research organisation, basing its finding on a limited sample, estimated that seven out of every ten television homes followed the hearings on TV. Considering the fact that there were approximately fifteen million television homes in the United States by the end of 1951, the estimate of a total audience of more than ten million viewers, made by station WPIX in New York, seems fairly reasonable.

Many factors need to be taken into account in trying to explain the tremendous popular response to the Crime Committee hearings. One thing which undoubtedly affected the success of the telecasts was the increase in number of television sets from less than a million in 1948 to a figure fifteen times that number three years later. By 1951 a


52 Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 61, March 26, 1951.
considerable proportion of the total population was within the range of television. Earlier hearings might have had an equal result given a comparable situation.

Aside from the "novelty" incident to the television medium in presenting programs of this character, the hearing telecasts climaxd a long "build-up" from interest stimulated by earlier hearings held in key cities across the nation.53 By the time the Crime Committee reached New York, the public appetite was thoroughly whetted in expectation of greater things to come.

The effect of the Crime Committee telecasts on the legislative broadcasting issue

The timing of the Crime Committee telecasts could not have been better in order to stimulate discussion of legislative broadcasting in Congress. Just three months after the Kefauver Committee concluded its deliberations, the Senate Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments conducted a series of hearings on Congressional organization. As in the 1945 hearings on the same subject, Congressional public relations received a large measure of attention from the committee. And legislative broadcasting proposals constituted the primary feature of plans for improving public relations of Congress.

53 The San Francisco hearings drew the largest daytime audience in that city's television history. An estimated 3,000 phone calls jammed the switchboard at station KECA-TV, Hollywood, during the telecast of the Los Angeles hearings. The story was the same in Kansas City, St. Louis, New Orleans and Detroit where the hearings held locally were enthusiastically received by the television audience. Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 72, March 12, 1951.
Senator Kefauver appeared before the Committee to urge the televising of public committee hearings, and a similar recommendation was received from Francis O. Wilcox, chief of staff for the Senate Committee of Foreign Relations. Representative Javits of New York, an outspoken advocate of Congressional broadcasting, called attention to a House Resolution which he had introduced and which would open the House gallery to radio and television broadcasters for the purpose of broadcasting the important debates of the House over regular commercial channels.  

Paul Sifton, national legislative representative for the United Automobile Workers, reiterated the same arguments he had advanced earlier before the LaFollette-Monroney Committee in 1945, "urging that all sessions of each House of the Congress, and such hearings of standing and special committees as may be designated by standing committees of each House, be put on the air, both TV and radio, in full coast-to-coast broadcasts, without editing, censorship, or comment, through Nation-wide networks owned and operated by Congress."

Senator Wiley outlined his proposal that Congress "adopt a planned program of televising selected committee hearings," governed by a code of fair practices to protect the rights of witnesses. Senator Humphrey recommended that the committee give consideration to the

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55 Paul Sifton, statement before the Senate Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, ibid., pp. 422-40.
idea of experimenting with broadcasting of important debates, but hesitated to endorse any specific proposal. Other witnesses approved the principle of Congressional broadcasting without further elaboration.

However, the Crime Committee hearings had one result which reflected to the disadvantage of advocates of legislative broadcasting. Certain of the witnesses who appeared before the Kefauver Crime Committee had refused to testify under "the glare of television lights," and the Committee's recommendation that they be cited for contempt of Congress resulted in a controversy as to whether the televising of a committee hearing constituted an invasion of the civil rights of witnesses called to appear before the committee. It is probable that this controversy was in part responsible for the fact that the Committee on Expenditures in Executive Departments, at the conclusion of its hearings, merely summarized the testimony presented before it, and made no recommendations on the subject of Congressional broadcasting.

The Army-McCarthy hearing telecasts

The Kefauver Crime Committee telecasts left Congress highly impressed with the power of television to "educate" the citizen and with the importance of Congressional committees as a primary source of public information. Between 1951 and 1954 television continued to extend its physical coverage to include a larger part of the population and practically every city of any size. By 1954, the stage was set for another history-making television performance, the tele-
For three years legislative broadcasting had held the limelight of public discussion. The tremendous impact of the Kefauver telecasts had focused attention, for the first time, on the powers and procedures of Congressional investigating committees and on the rights of witnesses compelled to testify publicly before such committees. Quite by accident, television had stimulated public discussion of government in a way and to a degree unanticipated by the members of the Kefauver Committee or by Congress. And members of Congress were of divided opinions as to the merits of so much discussion of procedural questions, and were inclined to be exceedingly cautious in all matters where television was concerned.

For ten months after the imposition of the Rayburn ban in 1952 there were no broadcasts of any House Committee proceeding. Even after the Rayburn ban was rescinded in 1953 the chairmen of Congressional committees were often reluctant to open committee hearings to the broadcast media. Those proceedings which were televised, furthermore, failed to capture the attention of the public in any significant degree. Yet the list of telecasts during 1953 covered a broad range of topics of vital concern to the electorate---East-West trade problems, reductions in the Armed Forces budget, Korean war ammunition shortages, the Government information program, waterfront crime, the Voice of America, Communist infiltration in American life---to
mention the most significant investigations presented to the viewing
dPublic.56

But the top television story of the decade occurred in 1954—the
sensational television presentation of the Army-McCarthy hearings which
lasted for six full weeks. From the standpoint of audience appeal,
the hearings had even more to commend them than did the Kefauver
exposes—the dramatic spectacle of the controversial junior Senator
from Wisconsin pitted against the Secretary of the Army. Even with
respect to preliminary "build-up," the Army-McCarthy hearing tele-
casts compared favorably with the dramatic qualities of the Kefauver
Committee "road show." Senator Joseph McCarthy in 1954 was the stormy
petrel of the political scene. His activities had been headline
news in the press for months. His clash with the Army dated back
more than a year when his committee had sought unsuccessfully to
secure testimony from military personnel. The 1954 hearings, in-
volving interrogation of key defense officials, was an attempt by the
investigating subcommittee to fix responsibility for alleged Communist
infiltration into the armed forces.

Immediately prior to the start of the hearings, a succession
of events served to heighten public interest in the Army-McCarthy
squabble. In response to attacks made by Adlai Stevenson on a network
program, McCarthy made a dramatic request of the NBC and CBS tele-

56 See Appendix III.
vision networks for "equal time" to reply to the charges. His request was turned down, although the networks did donate free time to the Republican National Committee instead. On March 9, on the floor of the Senate, a fellow Republican, Ralph Flanders of Vermont, made a speech attacking McCarthy, repeating portions of his remarks later for television newsmen. That same night, Edward R. Murrow aired his sensational film documentary program on McCarthy over the Columbia Broadcasting System. A few days later, on March 14, Roy Cohn, chief counsel for Senator McCarthy's special investigating committee, appeared on "Meet the Press" to present his side of the growing rift between McCarthy and the Army.57

Well publicised in advance, the Army-McCarthy hearings began on April 22, recessed from May 18 to 24, and finally ended on June 17. In all the hearings ran for 36 days, consuming a total of 187 broadcast hours.

The American Broadcasting Company carried the hearings in full on both its radio and its television facilities, as did the DuMont network on television. The National Broadcasting Company carried the first two days of testimony in their entirety, then televised only filmed highlights of the session. The Columbia Broadcasting System passed up live coverage from the beginning in favor of newsreel coverage. ABC-TV fed the hearings to its basic network of 56 stations,

with additional stations carrying certain of the proceedings to raise the total number of stations carrying all or part of the hearings to 79. After NBC-TV discontinued its live coverage, thirteen NBC stations continued regular coverage by use of the ABC network facilities.58

On the opening day, April 22, 1954, an estimated thirty million people across the nation viewed the initial proceedings.59 The second day of the hearings was occupied with a dispute over legal technicalities, resulting in a decided decline in audience interest and the dropping by NBC of its live coverage. Popularity of the hearings varied considerably from day to day and from city to city. In some areas, interest was exceedingly low, although in Boston and Washington it was at fever pitch.60 At the conclusion of the hearings, Dr. Sidney Roslow, director of a leading audience research firm, reported that "better than 30 per cent of the nation's 30 million individual TV homes regularly heard the hearings in whole or part... once a housewife dialed the hearing, anything else was in the nature of an interruption until the conclusion of the session."61 At any given moment, according to Roslow, there were more than three million families

58 Robert Hinckley, vice president, American Broadcasting Company, statement before the Subcommittee on Rules, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, op. cit., Part 9, pp. 571-77.

59 Although some reports indicate that the Army-McCarthy hearings were not as popular as the Kefauver hearings, the audience was numerically larger because there were two and one-half times as many television homes and nearly 300 more television stations operating in 1954 than in 1950-51.

60 Variety, p. 1+, April 28, 1954.

61 Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 9, June 28, 1954.
"glued to their tv sets" watching the Army-McCarthy spectacle. Program ratings in individual cities, however, indicate that the number of viewers was proportionately less than for the Kefauver hearings three years earlier. 62

In addition to television coverage, radio devoted considerable time to broadcasting the hearings. The Mutual Broadcasting System reported 137 hours and 20 minutes of radio coverage of the proceedings, while ABC-Radio totalled 130 hours. Other networks carried some of the proceedings live, plus recorded excerpts from the testimony. Total time and production cost of television and radio coverage of the Army-McCarthy hearings amounted to $10,763,000, divided almost equally between radio and television. Network cost estimates were as follows: 63

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<th>Television</th>
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<tr>
<td>ABC-TV</td>
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<td>CBS-TV</td>
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<td>DuMont</td>
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<td>CBS Radio</td>
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<td>NBC Radio</td>
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<td>Mutual</td>
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The cost of carrying the hearings live by ABC-TV ran to $10,000 per day.

62 One research organization reported that ratings in ten cities averaged only 6.0 for the opening day over NBC-TV, and 8.8 the following morning. A six-city average showed ABC-TV coverage rated at 1.0 for the opening, 2.2 the next day. Still another report gave an opening day rating of 10 in New York, with a rating of 9 the following morning---at which time Washington, D. C. showed a 14 rating and Chicago an 8. ---Variety, p. 26, April 28, 1954.

63 Broadcasting-Telescasting, p. 9, June 21, 1954.
or more, according to network estimates. Live coverage was not made available to West Coast stations by ABC because of the excessive network line costs involved. To have added Denver, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles and San Francisco to the network would have doubled the weekly cost, while the addition of the Pacific Northwest would have meant another $33,500 per week. These figures indicate that the broadcast coverage of thirty-six days of the Army-McCarthy hearings was more expensive than coverage of both political conventions and election returns in 1952.

**Impact of the Army-McCarthy hearings**

Popular interest is not reflected solely by audience size or program ratings. A strong indication of the impact which the televised hearings had upon their audience was the listener reaction in Altoona, Pennsylvania, a city of 71,000 population. A one-day spot check by the local station, WFBG, asking listeners whether they wanted the broadcasts continued, brought a total of 47,000 letters and telegrams from viewers. When NBC-TV after two days decided to suspend live network coverage of the hearings, so many complaints were received by the subcommittee, as well as by the network and its affiliated stations, that Senator Mundt, the subcommittee chairman, was impelled to tell the television audience at the start of the third day to address all future complaints direct

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to the network and not the committee. In Los Angeles more than 4,000 protests were received by the local NBC station as a result of cancellation of the NBC coverage, while the NBC affiliate in Cleveland reported 2,500 phone calls protesting discontinuance of network service. Stations carrying the live proceedings in their entirety received volumes of mail, chiefly filled with praise for the stations' "public service" in carrying the telecasts. Congressmen, too, were flooded with mail from constituents who had viewed the proceedings on television, and there were few Senators or Representatives who could any longer question that television was effective in stimulating popular interest in politics. On the contrary, the average Congressman was becoming increasingly fearful that television might be too potent an instrument of political education, as indicated by the wave of measures introduced in Congress in 1954-55 designed to prohibit or restrict the televising of Congressional proceedings.

Legislative broadcasting after the Army-McCarthy hearings

In the few short years between 1951 and 1954 major changes had occurred in the character of public discussion of legislative broadcasting. Radio no longer played a significant part in broadcast proposals; attention was centered on television. The controversy had shifted gradually from broadcasting the debates and proceedings of either House to televising of Congressional committee hearings. From discussion of the propriety of compelling a witness to testify before

television cameras, the debate moved to the problem of formulating standard rules of fairness in the conduct of committee investigations and then to analysis of the investigative power of committees.

Although the Congressional broadcasting issue became inextricably bound up in the general controversy over investigating committees, there were still sporadic efforts being made to secure legislative approval for the broadcasting of hearings and of Congressional proceedings. Immediately following the Army-McCarthy hearings the Jenner Subcommittee on Rules opened hearings on all pending resolutions relating to the conduct of Senate investigating committees. The committee aim was to survey "the investigation as a fundamental legislative instrument", and to "analyze the alleged abuses and proposed remedies." 67 Between June 28 and August 13, 1954, the Subcommittee held sixteen public hearings and heard fifty-five witnesses, including twenty-five members of Congress, representatives of the broadcasting industry and other interested groups. The question of televising committee hearings was incidental to the committee's main purpose, and was considered only in relation to the rights of witnesses before Congressional committees---a problem aggravated by televising the proceedings. Nearly every witness had something to say with respect to television indicating the powerful effect the new medium was having upon political opinion.

Support for Congressional broadcasting came from an unexpected source during the hearings. The chairman of the board of directors of the American Civil Liberties Union, Ernest Angell, told the members of the Subcommittee that the ACLU had modified its earlier stand and now held "there should be complete democratic freedom of communication with respect to legislative hearings, without discrimination against television and radio." "Once fair procedures are set up," Angell stated, "we do not believe any witness should have the unilateral right to deprive millions of viewers of the right to see legislative hearings."68

In its final report, the Subcommittee commented that it was not prepared to go as far as the ACLU in subordinating the rights of witnesses to the "rights" of viewers or listeners of the communications media. "If we accept the premise that the public is entitled to be present in all public sessions of Congressional committees, it would seem to follow that broadcasting, televising, and photographing of such proceedings ... are a legitimate means for acquainting the public with the activity of its legislature," but, said the committee, "witnesses are entitled to be protected from harassment by lights or cameras or any other source."69 As a secondary recommendation, however, the Subcommittee proposed "that the Committee on Rules and Administration

68 Ernest Angell, chairman of the board of directors, American Civil Liberties Union, statement before the subcommittee on Rules, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, Hearings, op. cit., Part 4, p. 201.

study the practicability of installing up-to-date facilities suitable for the unobtrusive coverage of committee hearings by the various communications and news media.\textsuperscript{70}

In 1955 the House Rules Committee, after hearing testimony for two days on a resolution to amend House rules to permit broadcasting and telecasting of committee proceedings, discussed the matter in a closed session, but declined to report the resolution out on the floor for action by the whole House. The resolution, House Resolution 99, introduced by Representative Meader, was identical to one he had introduced in the previous session of Congress. The measure proposed the amendment of House Rule XI 25 (a) to allow microphone and camera coverage at the discretion of the committee concerned. Five Congressmen appeared before the Rules Committee in support of the resolution—all Republicans. Testifying against the proposal was another Republican. The committee itself had two of its members supporting the resolution—one Republican and one Democrat—but four committee members voicing opposition, also evenly divided on party lines.\textsuperscript{71}

For the first time in the history of the legislative broadcasting discussion, measures seeking to bar live broadcasting of Congressional proceedings appeared during 1954 and 1955. In 1954, Senators Johnson of South Carolina and Stennis of Mississippi spon-

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p. 31.

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Broadcasting-Telecasting}, pp. 75-76, March 7, 1955.
sored Senate Concurrent Resolution 86 which provided that "no part of any hearing or other proceeding of any committee of the Congress shall be broadcast by television or recorded by means of any television or motion-picture camera for use in any television broadcast." An almost identical measure was introduced in the same year by Representative Rogers of Florida (House Concurrent Resolution 239).

Under the control of a Democratic Speaker, the House of Representatives in 1955 is once again closed to television, but the issue has already gone far beyond party lines. Evidence of fear and distrust of television in its political context is being demonstrated in many quarters. As broadcasters echo the press in demanding the "right" to cover legislative proceedings as they choose, Congressmen become more stubborn in their growing opposition. Accustomed to the freedom and protection of the executive session, and empowered to limit publicity to whatever degree desired, the average lawmaker can afford to ignore such arguments as are advanced by the broadcasting industry spokesmen. According to W. E. O'Brien, administrative assistant to Senator Mundt, further use of television in committee hearings will increase the likelihood of executive sessions, while several Senators told O'Brien privately they did not want all sessions of their committees open to television. Even when television was allowed, they first wanted to make sure that the hearing itself was "in the public interest".  

72 Congressional Record, p. 7588, June 11, 1954.
The Chairman of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee stated in 1953 that his Committee deals with statistics and facts, requiring the close attention of all members at all times, so he concluded that television would be a distracting influence in his Committee. One irascible member of the House Rules Committee hearing testimony on the Meader resolution in behalf of legislative broadcasting condemned broadcast coverage roundly during the 1955 hearings on the measure. If certain Senate committees had not been televised, he asserted, the House Rules Committee would not have to conduct hearings on the subject. He did not believe House activities should be broadcast or telecast.74

The tide of opinion is running strongly against legislative broadcasting in Congress and there is little hope for a change in attitude in the foreseeable future. This automatically raises the question as to the desirability of a change, whether, under the circumstances, legislative broadcasting has any practical merit. The answer lies in the optimistic sentiments of the little handful of television's adherents in Congress. "The very fact that no previous session of the American Congress has been so closely followed by so many of the nation's citizens is itself a commentary on this miracle of modern communication," said Senator Schoeppel in 1954. The significance of television goes far beyond the spectacular coverage of committee hearings, he added, noting that the important fact was that

television "has shown itself to be a valuable new tool of the democratic process itself."\textsuperscript{75}

As indicated earlier in this discussion, Congress has never in history achieved the measure of public confidence and understanding required for the efficient functioning of representative democracy. Inadvertently the main hope for more effective public information and understanding of the legislative process has become the occasion of discord and increased distrust. Yet even Congress with its characteristic reluctance to depart from tradition recognizes the imperative need for rebuilding public confidence in representative government. The future of Congressional broadcasting cannot be determined by the unilateral action of the broadcasting industry in insisting upon its "rights". In the face of Congressional opposition and misunderstanding, cooperation and compromise are imperative. The moralistic argument must give way to the practical and reasonable. The answer to the problem of legislative broadcasting, therefore, rests with acceptance by the public of a Congressional stake in public information, as well as the acceptance by Congress of its responsibilities in this regard. Only through a thorough understanding of the practical boundaries of action, and a recognition of the interests of each party, is a workable compromise possible.

\textsuperscript{75} Congressional Record, p. A6485-86, September 1, 1954.
CHAPTER VI

PRACTICAL LIMITATIONS UPON LEGISLATIVE BROADCASTING

It would seem that the benefits to be derived from some form of regular broadcasting of Congressional proceedings are so clearly apparent that Congress would be unable to justify its ban on broadcasting. Certainly the need for a Congressional public relations program has been emphasized time and time again. Televising of the hearings of Congressional committees has undeniably stimulated more interest in Congress among the voting public than any other development in the history of news-reporting. Yet the same Congressmen who welcome television with open arms during political campaigns and who give it a privileged status at the national nominating conventions are among those who are most obdurate in opposing Congressional broadcasting.

This fact is most puzzling to broadcasters who adopt the view that "television simply enlarges the public that is privileged to watch its Government in action"; so "what persuasive reason can there be for denying to Americans" that opportunity?1 Especially disturbing is the apparent inconsistency in the stand of such men as Speaker Rayburn. In 1947, following the televising of the opening ceremonies of the House of Representatives for the first time in history, Rayburn hailed the event as a truly "great occasion." Four years later, it was a completely


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different story. "Televise sessions of the House? Hell, no!" snapped the veteran Texas lawmaker at the conclusion of the Kefauver hearings, adding "not while I'm around here are they going to do that televising."²

Nor does this attitude seem inconsistent or illogical to certain other Congressional figures. Senator Johnston of South Carolina, for example, stated flatly: "I do not feel that I am depriving the American people of any firsthand knowledge of the proceedings or operations or actual business of the Senate" by restricting the use of television, for there has always been, in his opinion, "adequate" coverage of Congressional proceedings by other news media.³ Protests by broadcasters that this constitutes discrimination between media are dismissed lightly. Johnston and some of his colleagues cannot see than any discrimination exists since they do not advocate exclusion of radio or television reporters from Congressional proceedings, only the barring of microphones and cameras. Many Congressmen assert that the nature of the broadcasting medium places it in a separate category from the press. This point of view is defended by Senator Bennet of Utah, who says:

> We are presented now with a new medium of reporting. The older media have their weaknesses. Somehow I hope the American people have learned to adjust themselves to those weaknesses. But

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this new medium has almost terrifying powers that we have not learned to cope with. 4

Therefore, concludes the Senator, although there might conceivably be some occasions when the public interest might be served by broadcasting Senate proceedings, he is "not inclined to think there are."

Such attitudes become more comprehensible when television is viewed from the point of view of the politician rather than from the standpoint of the broadcaster or the ordinary voter. It is much too easy to overlook the far reaching political implications inherent in the question of Congressional broadcasting. And Congress, by its very nature, is a political body in which every decision must be subjected first of all to partisan considerations. The professional politician sees all too clearly the frightening potentiality of television to build or destroy national political figures overnight. Not forgotten is the way that television plummeted an obscure junior Senator from Tennessee into the ranks of leading contenders for the presidential nomination on the Democratic ticket. The opportunities for personal publicity that the new medium offers ambitious and undisciplined "Young Turks" of either party are well recognized by party leaders who see in television the threat of complete disruption of party organization. The very effectiveness of television is its own worst enemy in the political milieu.

To discover the way in which television may best serve to further

4 Senator Wallace F. Bennett of Utah, statement before the Subcommittee on Rules, Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, ibid., p. 73.
the aims of the democratic process, therefore, a common basis of understanding between Congress and broadcasters is imperative. This presupposes a willingness on the part of both to work together—an assumption which can be justified by the successful operation of the Congressional press galleries for nearly one hundred years. To achieve a harmonious working relationship between Congressmen and the television people may require a type of cooperation unique in the annals of news-reporting—one based upon mutual trust and common consent rather than the traditional suspicion and distrust of Congressional press relations.

The first step in developing the necessary understanding is the recognition by Congress that the broadcasting industry has the facilities necessary to narrow the gap between Congress and the public, by means of legislative broadcasting, but only Congress has the authority necessary to make legislative broadcasting a reality. In a realistic sense, therefore, the public interest in the outcome is incidental to the interests of the two principals involved—Congress and the broadcasting industry. The public, after all, has neither the facilities nor the authority to resolve the issue in a practical manner. Therefore, the key consideration is whether all parties can find an acceptable, and workable, compromise. This requires recognition of the obstacles standing in the way of Congressional broadcasting and practical consideration of how and to what extent these obstacles may be overcome. Furthermore, the salient facts of the political situation must be balanced against the limitations of the broadcasting medium as a prelude to any realistic compromise. And one of the most
important limitations of the broadcasting medium is the practical necessity of broadcasters to make effective use of their facilities in attracting audiences and in the sale of broadcast time.

With these points in mind, it is possible to review the current controversy over Congressional broadcasting to see what may be done to resolve the basic issues and to formulate a plan for legislative broadcasting that will meet any reasonable, practical objections.

Appraisal of Congressional broadcasting proposals

Nearly every plan for Congressional broadcasting yet suggested has been lacking in some essential respect. A majority of the advocates of legislative broadcasting apparently assumed that details are unimportant, that the principle alone was at stake. As a result, few proposals were outlined in any detail, with no attempt to spell out, except in the most general terms, what specifically might be accomplished by the adoption of a plan of legislative broadcasts. Not only were details lacking, but so were any really persuasive arguments in favor of the adoption of legislative broadcasting.

A majority of the measures advocating Congressional broadcasts since 1922 originated in the Senate and ordinarily covered only broadcasting of Senate proceedings and debates. The first such proposal called for the use of government-owned facilities. When it was pointed out that construction of adequate facilities would cost more than three million dollars, with an annual operating expense of an additional one million dollars, successive proposals recommended the use of regular
privately-owned broadcast channels.

The idea of a government-owned and operated broadcasting service continued to have an appeal for Congress, however. During the New Deal era in the 1930s, Roosevelt's use of radio in publicizing the Administration inspired Congress to give some thought to the idea of a Congressional station to be used for legislative broadcasting. Similar proposals were introduced in 1944 and in 1945, and were expanded in 1951 to incorporate television as well as radio. But government broadcasting stations, regardless of the intended objectives, received vigorous opposition from most Congressmen. Cost was a major stumbling block in the pre-Roosevelt period, while fear of propaganda helped prevent serious consideration of a Congressional station after 1932. The threat of government radio even resulted in the inclusion of a plank in the 1944 Republican platform condemning "any tendency to regard the press or radio as instruments of the Administration and the use of government publicity agencies for partisan ends."5

The difficulties inherent in a government-owned and operated system for Congressional broadcasting are well recognized by Congressmen of both political parties. Aside from minority party fears of majority party control, the "American system" of competitive, private broadcasting is too well established and too strongly entrenched to make possible a government "system" without bitter opposition both

from broadcasters and from the public. This Congressional "limitation" was conceded by Senator Pepper in 1945:

The resolution I introduced did not go into the question as to how the facilities should be provided. Frankly, I didn't want to get all the radio companies and the commentators on my neck and I was willing to experiment with the best technique by which the broadcasting might occur. But I think probably the only way to do it would be to build adequate Government-owned stations which would carry the proceedings of the Senate and the House of Representatives... in full.

Pepper felt confident that there would be no danger that a Congressionally-controlled station might degenerate into a "propaganda agency." His confidence was not shared by his colleagues, apparently, for the Pepper resolution failed to reach the floor of the Senate.

From the history of previous legislative broadcasting proposals it seems unlikely that Congress will press for its own broadcasting station at any time in the near future, although the proposal might be advanced at any time solely as a political maneuver to block any specific plan which gives sufficient promise of strong popular support.

The alternatives to a government broadcasting system for the airing of Congressional proceedings are two in number, both making use of available private network facilities. One involves a Congressional "program", in effect, controlled in its entirety by Congress in much the same fashion as the President's policy speeches are controlled by him.

The second would merely provide that commercial broadcasters shall have full access to Congressional proceedings.

In the first instance, Congress might do one of three things:

(1) buy time on commercial networks to air major debates, as suggested in the resolution passed by the 1944 convention of the American Federation of Labor;

(2) contract for regular network time for coverage of Congressional proceedings, but without compensation, as proposed by the Dill resolutions of 1928, 1929 and 1933; or

(3) make complete "recordings" of Congressional proceedings available at cost to commercial broadcasters, to be carried by them on a wholly voluntary basis, as suggested in the Coffee-Pepper resolutions of 1944 and 1945.

No matter which method Congress might prefer in insuring the broadcasting of its proceedings, the question of what should be broadcast, and how much, has proved disturbing to proponents and opponents of legislative broadcasting alike. During the 1945 hearings before the LaFollette-Monroney Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress, one Senator suggested a daily Senate broadcast from 10:00 A.M. to noon, with the speaking schedule worked out by committees representing the majority and minority viewpoints. By far the most comprehensive approach to the problem of what to broadcast was submitted by Doctor Robert D. Leigh, director of the Commission on Freedom of the Press, who argued for a reorganization of Congressional procedure and dis-

7 Senator Sheridan Downey of California, statement before the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress, _ibid._, p. 63.
discussion to provide for satisfactory broadcast "material". Leigh advocated the establishment of two kinds of evening radio sessions, each to occupy one night a week. One would be a formal voting session, the other would consist of debates on important issues. Both sessions would be under the control of a special bipartisan steering committee which would be responsible for selection of subject matter to be broadcast, the allocation of time, and the handling operational details involved in arranging the broadcasts with the networks. 3

Except for the Leigh proposal, none of the plans for Congressional broadcasting under the direct control of the legislative branch found sufficient backing in Congress or were sufficiently practical to warrant further consideration. From a realistic point of view, these several proposals ignored the practical requirements of the broadcasting situation by failing to specify the location of responsibility for handling the physical operating arrangements, and the nature of the commitments required either of Congress or of the broadcasting industry. By default, then, the question of Congressional broadcasting has revolved around the problem of access of radio and television to Congressional proceedings as a part of routine broadcast news coverage.

However, this should not be interpreted as meaning that giving the commercial broadcasters access to the deliberations of Congress, is by

3 Robert D. Leigh, director of the Commission on Freedom of the Press, statement before the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress, ibid., pp. 1076-77.
Itself a practical solution of the problem. As one writer commented several years ago, the "most stubborn stumbling block of all is the question of initiative." Initiative is absent in Congress for legislative broadcasting plans. Party leadership has not yet seen such broadcasts "as an aid in steering the agenda of legislative and public discussion," and neither party is wholly certain that allocation of time could be handled equitably for all persons concerned. In spite of the outspoken advocacy of legislative broadcasting by a small handful of Congressmen, the record of Congress in its consideration of broadcasting proposals over the past thirty years offers reasonable assurance that the initiative must come from outside Congress.

Nor is there much reason to believe that the initiative will come from the broadcasting industry. Broadcasters have been loud in their demands for the "right" to broadcast Congressional proceedings, and of committee hearings. But these same broadcasters, by and large, have offered no proposals for regular coverage of proceedings of committee hearings of either House. Nor has the broadcasting industry made any suggestions leading toward solution of problems raised in connection with legislative broadcasting. Access for radio and television to Congressional proceedings is demanded wholly as a matter of "right," with the broadcasting industry apparently unwilling to promise specific performance as to the kind or amount of broadcasts commercial stations

would carry. Frank Stanton, president of the Columbia Broadcasting System, adequately summed up the broadcasters' point of view in the first "network editorial" over CBS on August 26, 1954, when he said: "We want to emphasize that the right to cover legislative hearings for broadcasting necessarily carries with it the freedom of choice as to what method of radio or television coverage to use."

Faced with a continuing deadlock between Congress and the broadcasting industry, it becomes more important than ever that consideration be given to the practical limitations of broadcasting Congressional proceedings, in view of the attitudes of Congress and of the broadcasters. These limitations will ultimately shape the type of broadcast programs which may be made available to the American people, and an analysis of them may point out the nature of the compromises necessary before any Congressional broadcasting policy can be adopted.

**General limitations upon legislative broadcasting**

Whether discussing broadcasts of proceedings from the floor of either House, or broadcasts of Congressional committee hearings, certain questions have general application. Must the proceedings be carried in full, or can broadcasts be selective? Must Congressional broadcasts be carried solely as "public service programs" or may they be made available for commercial sponsorship—and, if the latter, upon what

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Many of the opponents of legislative broadcasting argue that unless full coverage of proceedings is assured, the listening or viewing audience will receive an "untrue" picture of what is happening. This concern has become especially acute in the case of televising Congressional committee hearings. An excellent case in point was the unfortunate occurrence during the televising of Senator McCary's investigation of the "Voice of America" in 1953 in which network coverage included the charges against one witness but ended before he had time to present his defense.11 The difficulty of insuring fair treatment of witnesses before Congressional investigating committees brought forth a report from the American Bar Association that while television greatly enhances public interest in government it can also circulate with great speed baseless accusations which may be to the irreparable injury of the persons accused. It may often, perhaps usually, be the case that this public view of any proceeding is only intermittent. The result may well be a distorted impression of the facts.12

Gould of The New York Times could see the possibility of an added

11 During the McCarthy investigation of the Voice of America, Reed Harris, deputy director of the International Information Administration, was the principal figure in the inquiry. In the midst of his rebuttal testimony, answering charges made against him earlier in the televised hearings, the American Broadcasting Company suddenly ended its coverage of the hearing and switched to a regularly-scheduled, sponsored giveaway show. The National Broadcasting Company likewise televised substantial portions of the testimony against Mr. Harris, picked up one session in which he was a witness, then discontinued its coverage before Harris had an opportunity to reply to many of the charges made against him.--Jack Gould, "Televised Hearings," The New York Times, section II, 11, March 8, 1953.

12 Congressional Record, p. 1712, February 29, 1952.
danger, that of the deliberate distorting of evidence by the committee itself:

If a network just agrees to carry limited segments of a hearing, this makes it possible to feature certain witnesses when the television cameras are on and build up a "show" especially for the unseen audience. In effect, an investigating committee then can exercise a high degree of editorial control of what goes on the nation's screens.  

To prevent any possibility of distortion or deliberate "slanting" of broadcasts for partisan purposes, Paul Sifton, legislative representative of the United Auto Workers, urged Congress to build its own network for the handling of Congressional broadcasts. He opposed any compromise less than full coverage as "very much against the public interest and dangerous to it." Sifton contended that allowing some committee hearings to be broadcast "in heavily cut versions framed in editorial comment and commercial advertising" might well "be prejudicial both to the individual participants in the hearings and to a thorough public knowledge and understanding of the statements, facts and issues presented."

Here a distinction between broadcast coverage of proceedings from the floor of the House or Senate and coverage of Congressional committee proceedings needs to be made. Most of the proposals for broadcasting Congressional proceedings (except for those made by Sifton) have con-

13 Gould, loc. cit.

ceded that much of the daily business of Congress is dull and uninteresting and that no useful purpose would be served in broadcasting roll-call votes on unimportant issues or the reading of private bills. In the case of broadcasting committee hearings, however, there is a substantial body of opinion in support of a policy of broadcasting the hearings in full or not at all.

And the broadcasters themselves hold that full coverage of the daily business of House and Senate is patently impossible. With each House in session approximately five hours daily, full coverage of floor proceedings alone would require practically the entire broadcasting facilities of two major networks from the standpoint of time on the air. Even full coverage of extended debates on either House, or of hearings of Congressional committees, is thoroughly impracticable except in the rarest instances. Three important factors determine the extent of broadcast coverage of Congressional proceedings and hearings: cost, prior commercial commitments, and audience interest.

Cost of broadcast coverage figures prominently in the thinking of radio and television executives. Faced with the economic necessity of making money in order to remain in business, networks weigh carefully the degree of public interest in a particular hearing before deciding to broadcast or televise it. With four networks making similar decisions, competitive factors tend to be quite important. In the case of the Army-McCarthy hearings, for example, ABC and NBC planned "live" coverage of the hearings, so CBS decided to carry only filmed excepts
for a nightly news roundup. Full simultaneous radio and television coverage of the hearings would have cost CBS an estimated four million dollars, taking into account loss of revenues from the commercial programs which would have had to be cancelled to permit such coverage. 15

After the first two days, NBC followed the policy set by CBS and instituted limited film coverage, leaving ABC the only network televising the hearings in full at the moment they were taking place. The hearings ran much longer than originally anticipated—a total of 36 days. ABC had a staff of twenty news and technical specialists working full-time on this one event, although only six of these individuals were actually present in the hearing room. Total cost to ABC was in excess of $360,000, exclusive of revenue lost through cancellation of commercial programs on the network or on ABC-affiliated stations. 16 A regular schedule of broadcasts or telecasts of this nature would be manifestly impossible, according to network executives, even if there was sufficient audience to justify it.

It cost ABC $10,000 per day simply in direct broadcasting costs, for an average of five daily broadcast hours, to televise. Assuming that House and Senate coverage would approximate this figure, cost of televising Congressional proceedings would run about two thousand

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16 Robert H. Hinckley, vice president, American Broadcasting Company, ibid., p. 574.
dollars per broadcast hour.

The importance of the cost factor is obvious when it is considered that in the Eightieth Congress, the House met for a total of 686 hours during the 144-day first session, and 538 hours in the 110-day second session. Televising the full proceedings from the floor of the House would have cost, at the two-thousand-dollars-per-hour figure, $1,372,000 for the first session and $1,072,000 for the second session. On the same basis, the 807 hours of Senate proceedings in the first session would have totalled $1,614,000, and the 653 hours of its proceedings in the second session, $1,306,000.17

Full nationwide coverage would have run considerably in excess of these figures and lost commercial revenue would boost the total bill to astronomical heights. (CBS estimated it would have cost $4,000,000—or $20,000 per broadcast hour—to have carried the hearings, which might mean that full network coverage could run to five or ten times the ABC-based figures.) Even sharing the cost among the networks by splitting up the time devoted to legislative broadcasting by any one network, the televising of all proceedings of Congress would still impose a substantial burden upon commercial broadcasters.

Commercial sponsorship is the only means by which broadcasters can afford to provide any sort of broadcast coverage of legislative affairs. The demands of broadcasters that they be permitted to "sell" Congressional broadcasts to commercial sponsors becomes more understandable when one considers that ABC devoted a total of 187 hours of broadcast time to the Army-McCarthy hearings---a substantial proportion of the total ABC programming during the 36-day period---and spent approximately $360,000 to provide the broadcasts, without compensation. Sponsorship offers two advantages: it minimizes the financial losses of such highly expensive broadcasts, and it tends to assure more extensive participation by network-affiliated stations. Even with commercial sponsorship, network executives point out that it is improbable that all costs will be absorbed. They refer to the fact that there is no way to predict in advance how long a given hearing or Congressional debate will last, and few advertisers would be willing to commit themselves to an unduly-prolonged series. Therefore, the networks are forced to charge for broadcast coverage according to the estimated length of the event, sometimes with disastrous results. In the case of the 1952 Republican national convention, the networks lost several million dollars over and above the revenue received from sponsorship when the conventions ran longer than anticipated. But without sponsorship, no network or station could afford to carry any event in its entirety.

Sponsorship has the further advantage of insuring that a Congressional broadcast will receive nation-wide coverage. If offered only on
a sustaining (non-commercial) basis, each station in the network would be free to carry the program or reject it as it saw fit. With network or local sponsorship permitted, an event such as the Army-McCarthy hearings may become much more attractive to a local station affiliated with a network, as it may then cancel a commercial program without too great a loss in station revenue. Since any extended coverage of a Congressional debate or committee hearing will involve equally extensive cancellation of commercial programs to clear time for continuous coverage of the legislative event, sponsorship becomes a practical necessity.

Notwithstanding the logic of the broadcasters' argument, commercial sponsorship is bitterly opposed by a considerable number of Congressmen. During the Army-McCarthy hearings, Senator Bennett of Utah introduced an anti-sponsorship resolution, under the joint auspices of thirty-six of his fellow-Senators. Support for the measure crossed party lines to an unusual extent, with twenty-four Republicans and thirteen Democrats joining with Bennett to oppose "commercializing" of Congressional broadcasts. Bennett listed five major objections to sponsored broadcasts of Senate committee hearings:

(1) Hearings sandwiched between commercials are in violation of good taste;

(2) Sponsorship opens the door to improper relationships between ambitious politicians and sponsors;

(3) Sponsorship offers a means by which corporate funds can be used for political purposes to evade existing laws;

(4) New motives would be introduced in the function and
conduct of the hearings themselves; and

(5) Constant exploitation of committee hearings would directly impede the legislative process.

In his opinion the televising of the Army-McCarthy hearings extended the length of the hearings from ten or twelve days—under "normal" circumstances—to thirty-six. While Bennett conceded that the public has a right to know what is going on in Congress, he objected to "commercialization of Senate business." Furthermore, he contended, the normal goal of a Senate committee should be to find areas of agreement, but the objective of radio and television is, "naturally enough, to emphasize the dramatic," and, by their very natures, "encourage—yes, almost demand—conflict, debate, and antagonism."18

Even if the matter of costs and sponsorship can be resolved, there remains the equally troublesome problem of the listening and viewing audience. How much of Congressional proceedings, debates, and committee hearings will the public accept? Would there not be reasonable justification for assuming that the law of diminishing returns affects listening and viewing behavior as it does in other areas of human activity, that satiation could reduce the total audience almost to the vanishing point? Certainly, no one would expect that a regular Congressional broadcasting schedule, no matter how interesting, could continue to hold the vast audiences which were spellbound by the sensational disclosures of the Kefauver Crime

18 Congressional Record, pp. 6356-57, May 18, 1954.
Committee, and which could scarcely tear themselves away from the Army-McCarthy spectacle. Both radio and television must serve the majority interest as well as that of minority audiences. Just as listening and viewing of the political conventions fell off drastically during the course of the broadcast coverage, with many listeners demanding a return to "normal programming," so might a sustained diet of legislative broadcasts quickly pall upon the public at large. "To abuse or overextend the individual's power to absorb any given subject," say the editors of The New York Times, "could be as ill-advised as not making sufficient effort to obtain participation." \(^\text{19}\)

Under the American system of broadcasting, it is the responsibility of the local broadcasting station to determine whether a given program is of interest to its audience. After balancing supposed audience interest against economic factors, a station manager makes his decision on whether to carry a particular network program or not. Coverage of a Congressional hearing by any of the four radio or three television networks is in no sense any guarantee that all stations affiliated with the network in question will carry the broadcasts. Under the regulations of the Federal Communications Commission, no station can be compelled to carry any network program. Unless a network program is sponsored, station interest in that particular program is greatly lessened. Non-sponsored, sustaining programs made available by a network to its affiliates sometimes enjoy a favorable reception, but

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more often not. Whether a member station will carry a given program
depends upon several factors: the time of broadcast, local interest
in the program content, local commercial commitments, etc. While some
stations show considerable interest in programs of a "public service"
character, as a general rule most stations follow the practice of
deciding on each program, individually, on its merits. 20

Without more adequate data, it would be foolhardy to attempt to
predict anything with respect to the prospective audiences for Con­
gressional broadcasts. Too much depends upon the nature of the broad­
casts themselves. Some advocates of legislative broadcasting argue
that size of audience should not be a determining factor, but that the
important thing is to make the business of government easily and
freely accessible to the listening and viewing public. In the com­
petitive, commercial broadcasting field, however, network executives
want more assurance of audience interest in programs, to justify the
time and expense involved. While few broadcasters may claim to be
authorities on the workings of public opinion, their experience in
programming and the evidence of audience "ratings" tends to confirm

20 Indicative of the variable acceptance of program offerings by
network affiliates is the following tabulation of NBC sustaining shows
and the number of stations declining or accepting each, as of March 5,
1950: "America United," 43 stations accepted, 125 rejected; "UN Is My
Beat," 9 accepted, 158 rejected; "Chicago Round Table," 69 accepted,
99 rejected; "American Forum of the Air," 48 accepted, 120 rejected;
"Living—1950," 113 accepted, 55 rejected; "Kaltenborn," 38 accepted,
75 rejected; "Mrs. Roosevelt," 66 accepted, 71 rejected. Charles
Frederick Lindsley, Radio and Television Communication (New York:
Lippmann's analysis of the public as "inexpert in its curiosity, intermittent... [discerning] only gross distinctions," and at the same time "slow to be aroused, and quickly diverted" personalizing everything and interested only "when events have been melodramatized as a conflict." Likewise self-evident to broadcasters is the truth of Bailey's contention that the public tires quickly with old sensations and can sustain but one big sensation at a time.

Critics of Congressional broadcasting charge that broadcasters are only interested in the "highly sensational" events, ignoring the really worthwhile business of government. Broadcasters prefer to use the term "newsworthy", but generally agree that the more spectacular events would most likely be broadcast. With public interest as the fundamental criterion of whether to broadcast or not, the number of issues worthy of consideration as possible subjects of broadcasting is materially reduced. "Hearings that stir national interest to the roots are few and far between," Hinckley of ABC told members of the Senate Rules Subcommittee, and "only occasionally does such a momentous issue arise that people thousandfold across the country would like to follow personally every detail." Recognizing the limitations imposed by public interest, network officials and proponents of Congressional


23 Hinckley, op. cit., p. 575.
broadcasting agree that any plan for complete or even extensive coverage of House or Senate proceedings, or "constant exploitation of committee hearings," would be wholly unrealistic. "Probably half or more of our time is consumed in technical and detailed discussions of bills which would have no particular interest to all of the people and those would not be broadcast," said Representative Coffee in elaborating on his Congressional broadcasting proposal in 1945, "but to a discussion . . . affecting the nation and the world, the public should be permitted to listen in, if they desire." Public interest was the key to the several broadcast proposals made by Representative Javits of New York, who recommended broadcasting only debates and hearings "in which there is unusual interest." (Italics supplied)

It is important to observe that these two factors, unusual interest and national interest, are repeatedly emphasized by network executives as the only sound basis of coverage of government proceedings. Events which satisfy these requirements justify coverage by a national network in serving the national interest of the public and, accordingly, have a greater likelihood of attracting a maximum audience. Nor can it be denied that an important consideration is that such events, in drawing large audiences, are generally more attractive to prospective sponsors.


25 Congressional Record, p. 597, January 26, 1953.
Commercial commitments of networks and their affiliated stations impose a very real limitation upon legislative broadcasting, unless on a regularly-scheduled basis. Under the terms of their licensing by the Federal Communications Commission, broadcasting stations are expected to carry important events "in the public interest, convenience and necessity." General practice in the broadcasting industry has accustomed advertisers to expect that major events will take precedence and that their sponsored programs are subject to cancellation at any time for such an event. But this presumes that such occasions will be relatively infrequent. A very extensive policy of Congressional broadcasting by the networks would seriously disrupt program schedules and greatly reduce the effectiveness of radio and television as advertising media. Even ignoring the adverse reaction of advertisers whose programs are cancelled in favor of a "public service" broadcast of a Congressional debate or hearing, too frequent disruptions of program schedules have incalculable effects upon audiences.

Political campaigns offer decisive proof that wholesale cancellation of regularly-scheduled programs produces audience resentment instead of interest. Ratings are almost invariably lower for political broadcasts than the programs they displace. And as shown earlier in the case of the 1952 political conventions, listeners soon tired of the interminable convention speech-making and began to ask when regular program service would be resumed. The listening and viewing audience, as well as the advertiser, has a definite stake in station decisions to cancel established programs to carry special events, and
does not hesitate to make its wishes known. And no station can survive for long by decisions contrary to the wishes of its audience or its advertisers. In spite of the undeniable public interest in the Army-McCarthy hearing telecasts, regularly-scheduled programs on CBS-Television (which did not carry the hearings) lost surprisingly few viewers to the McCarthy "show".

The "facts of life" in programming Congressional broadcasts, therefore, may be summarized as follows:

- (1) Only events of unusual interest or importance can be justified in the opinion of broadcasters;
- (2) The subject matter should have national or international implications;
- (3) Broadcasts should be of limited duration;
- (4) They should not occur too frequently; and
- (5) "Normal" programming should be disrupted as little as possible.

This argues against regular daily coverage of Congressional proceedings or of extensive coverage of committee hearings unless justified by unusual public interest in the subject matter to be included in the broadcast. Especially, extensive coverage of debates or hearings over an indefinite period of time seems likely only in cases of the utmost importance. It would be difficult to determine the bound-

26 American Research Bureau ratings for May 3, 1954, indicate that CBS morning programs lost as much as 25 per cent of their usual audience, while afternoon shows lost little more than 10 per cent, and one program---the Bob Crosby Show---actually showed an increase in rating in spite of the competition of the Army-McCarthy hearings.---

ARB TV Nationals, May, 1954.
daries limiting legislative broadcast coverage, but it can be assumed that the criterion of public interest in a given issue imposes arbitrary but very real limitations upon the nature and extent of possible broadcasts in the existing radio and television programming situation.

**Special problems in broadcasting Congressional proceedings**

Quite aside from the limitations imposed by the nature of the broadcasting media, there are a number of special problems posed by the conditions within the legislative bodies themselves. The differences between the two Houses; the nature of their proceedings; how debates to be broadcast would be selected; how time would be allocated between the two parties, or between proponents and opponents of a given measure; the problem of determining who would speak; what to do when both Houses are in session simultaneously or there is an important issue being debated in one House and an equally significant public hearing being conducted at the same time—these are only a few of the questions which have been raised again and again in discussing legislative broadcasting.

To the broadcasters, however, the really crucial problems in broadcasts of proceedings are those which affect audience interest in the broadcast. There is no question of the interest factor in those previously-broadcast events such as the opening of Congress, or speeches by the President or by honored guests before joint sessions of the two Houses. For example, Prime Minister Churchill achieved a rating of 37.0 on his address to Congress, on May 19, 1943, which was carried on
a nationwide radio network. While this rating was by no means comparable to that of the average speech by President Roosevelt, in the same period, it was far above average for daytime ratings.

There is undeniable evidence that personalities will always be significant in attracting audience. There is less evidence that issues can be made equally attractive to listeners. Yet the public information value of broadcasting Congressional proceedings presumably would rest in large degree with issues. And some issues, undeniably, have far less publicity value and less chance of eliciting public interest than others. Griffith has remarked upon the relationship between controversy and public interest, for example, emphasizing the fact that technical and noncontroversial subjects, regardless of importance, get little publicity in the press. The presumption is strong that such subjects have little interest for the public. A number of respected authorities have charged that Congressional debates themselves contribute little to public understanding. Wilson took the position that "there can be little coherency about the debates," since they usually deal with individual bills, not with policies. In consequence, he concluded, debates are uninteresting and "to be

27 Broadcasting, 1944 Yearbook Number, p. 28.

instructed by them is impossible." Davenport was equally pessimistic about the information value of Congressional debates. "The House," he said, "is forever entangled in a maze of bills, often private or sectional or provincial in their nature." Only in the Senate did he find anything worthwhile. Davenport would certainly have opposed routine broadcasting of House proceedings as being incomprehensible to the listener, and more confusing than illuminating.

"Both Congress and the electorate are forced to rely almost entirely upon the Senate," comments one writer, "for intelligent, analytic, and fairly systematic discussion and debate." The House, in the same writer's opinion, offers little of value to the listener or viewer because it has sacrificed debate and discussion in favor of "efficiency" in the output of bills. An outstanding example of the effect of limited debate in the House of Representatives is allotment by the 1935 Rules Committee of only three hours for general debate on the Wagner labor relations act—a measure so controversial and bitterly opposed that it became a major issue in the next two presidential campaigns. The Senate permits unlimited debate, thereby insuring full


discussion of major policy issues, but this in turn poses difficult problems for broadcast coverage of its deliberations. The House, inadequate though its debates may be in their contribution to public information, lends itself more easily to the requirements of the broadcasting situation.

Difficulties of broadcasting the actual proceedings of Congress, however, may easily be resolved with Congressional cooperation. Representative Javits offered a relatively simple solution in which only the important debates would be broadcast and televised, thus avoiding overemphasis upon parliamentary technicalities and routine business. In the House, he proposed that the membership decide which proceedings were "important," and that the Speaker should be responsible for the details of broadcasting procedure. A similar plan might be devised for the Senate, provided some limitation could be imposed on that portion of debate which would be broadcast.33

Leigh's plan was even more comprehensive, calling as it did for special evening sessions of both Houses for broadcasting purposes. By condensation of procedures to emphasize only the important issues, Leigh felt that the heavy diet of "parliamentary by-play and desultory discussion, the frequent bluster, and occasional filibuster" might be avoided, and the "drama of Congress deciding important matters would be

33 Representative Jacob K. Javits of New York, statement before the Senate Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, op. cit., pp. 297-303.
brought directly before the people they represent." 34

The experiences of Australia and New Zealand, and of the state of Oklahoma, might prove invaluable in working out details for the handling of Congressional proceedings. All three have put their legislative bodies "on the air". New Zealand first broadcast the proceedings of its Parliament in 1936, initially limiting the broadcasts to the more important debates. After a few months, however, the innovation seemed well enough received and the proceedings were broadcast in full. 35 Australia commenced broadcasting proceedings of its Federal Parliament in July, 1946, and has expanded its legislative broadcast coverage to include both Houses. At least six hours of Parliamentary broadcasts are carried daily on three days of each week, with possibly four or five hours on a fourth day toward the end of a session. The Australian Senate is usually the subject of Wednesday's broadcast coverage, with House proceedings aired on Tuesday and Thursday, as well as on Friday when the House meets on that day. 36 The Oklahoma legislature, in 1951, was televised originally on the basis of the following plan: telecasts for one hour, twice weekly, one period being devoted to each House. This did not work as well as had been anticipated, so the plan was modified to permit televising

34 Leigh, op. cit., pp. 1076-77.
according to the day's calendar, with the result that the House was televised more often than was the Senate. Floor leaders in both Houses cooperated by disposing of all routine procedural matters before broadcast hour, while authors of bills in which there was considerable public interest usually managed to have them set for special order to coincide with the telecast coverage of the proceedings.  

Thus, while broadcasting or televising sessions of Congress does pose some knotty problems, experience here and abroad suggests that the problems are not insurmountable. Representative Coffee has gone even further, saying that "details are not important; it is whether or not one believes in the broadcasting of the proceedings of Congress. And that, in the end, is the key to the whole matter.

Of more immediate concern is the dilemma posed by the question of Congressional procedure. From the experience of Australia and New Zealand, and in keeping with the more detailed Congressional broadcasting proposals, a certain amount of reorganization of legislative procedures must accompany the decision to broadcast. Congress, understandably, is not likely to make the procedural changes necessary to make its debates more comprehensible and interesting for broadcasting purposes, without concrete assurance that the broadcasters will want to carry these debates. Ten years ago, the radio networks were


strongly interested in the idea of regular programming of Congressional debates. Lately, interest has shifted to the Congressional committee hearing, and it is doubtful whether networks and stations would react at all favorably to a proposal that they carry a daily Congressional broadcast series on radio or television.

As mentioned previously, broadcasters' decisions are based on probable audience interest. Since 1944, experience with even the limited amount of legislative broadcasting possible under existing conditions has tended to dampen earlier enthusiasm. The only clue to the possible size of the audience for legislative broadcasting on a regular basis is the rating information on the United Nations telecasts of 1951. From January to June, 1951, a total of 22 quarter-hours of proceedings of the UN was televised in the New York area. Average ratings in New York City were 3.5. The average newscast or feature film on television at the time was rated between 3.1 and 3.3. But during this same period, the Roller Derby broadcasts received an average rating of 6.1, while one broadcast by President Truman within the period was rated at 41.3. Later that same year, during the week of December 1-7, 1951, UN coverage amounted to 14 quarter-hours of broadcast time with an average rating of 3.1—a greater volume of "legislative broadcasting" but with a still lower average rating. And this was during the Korean War, when interest in UN actions

presumably was at a reasonably high level. Only the year before, the 1950 telecast of the opening of the UN Security Council had been hailed as "the most dramatic presentation ever seen on video," and by 1951 the faces and mannerisms of Vishinsky and Molotov were familiar to thousands of viewers. In 1954, three years later, CBS carried the program "UN in Action" on television for a half-hour period on three days of each week, and for fifteen minutes on the other two days. By mid-December, 1954, the show was dropped, the time reverting to local stations for their own programming, and the CBS key station in New York replacing the program with a matinee movie. The novelty of the UN in action had diminished to the vanishing point and public interest had apparently shifted to newer experiences. Whether broadcasts of Congressional proceedings would meet a similar fate would be difficult to predict, but broadcasters are likely to be extremely reluctant in making long-range commitments for large blocks of program time unless more proof can be supplied of audience interest than currently exists.

Special problems of broadcasting Congressional committee hearings

Aside from the critical issues raised by the rights of witnesses compelled to testify before a Congressional committee, perhaps the most significant problem with reference to committee broadcasts and telecasts is that of insuring a fair and accurate presentation of the proceedings. As mentioned in a previous chapter, an investigating committee may have already heard every detail of the testimony which will

41 *Variety*, p. 32, December 15, 1944.
be "televised", making the hearing, in effect, a well-rehearsed "show" for political or other considerations. Where this is the case, and the committee members clearly intend to use the hearing for public information on a given issue, the broadcasting problem is easily handled. The program format can be prepared in advance, and the finished product can be as well "staged" as any studio dramatic program. While still small, the number of "hearings" of this type is growing in number with the tacit approval of Congressional leaders of both parties. One such was the series of United Nations hearings carried on during 1954 by a subcommittee on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in a number of carefully selected cities. The purpose of the hearings, according to the subcommittee chairman, Senator Alexander Wiley, was to tap the grass roots for reactions to the United Nations and to learn how the public across the nation feels about the proposed UN charter revision. Witnesses appeared on invitation, and testified under a strict time limit. All testimony was not only voluntary, but witnesses were selected by a local civic organization which served as "sponsor" of the hearing in that particular community. In Minneapolis, the day-long hearing telecast carried by a local station showed forty-seven "witnesses" testifying. While the "arranged" telecast lacked the drama and controversy of the Army-McCarthy episode, "even those who might have tuned in accidentally or through curiosity would have found the discussion sufficiently
Fortunately or unfortunately, the number of "staged" hearings is small, and many of these are used as campaigning vehicles for committee members up for reelection. The majority of hearings in which the public is most interested consist of investigations seeking evidence of wrongdoing, where much of the testimony is compulsory, involving hostile or uncooperative witnesses. These are more likely to have the elements of controversy and drama which contribute to sustained audience interest.

Even under the best of circumstances it is difficult for the broadcaster to decide which hearings to cover, and how extensively to cover them. The experience with the Army-McCarthy hearings showed that once a network has committed itself to live coverage it is exceedingly difficult to stop short of carrying all of the proceedings clear to the end of the investigation. NBC did stop after two days, and received widespread criticism from its stations and their audiences. ABC, as the costs began to mount up, would have probably liked to have followed the example of the NBC, but feared the audience reaction too much to attempt it.

Even sponsorship is only a partial answer, in the case of "unstaged" committee hearings. It is difficult to find a sponsor willing to buy a "pig in a poke". No one knows in advance whether a partic-

ular committee hearing will be productive of drama and suspense, or whether it will be dull and uninteresting. The inability to estimate the length of the period over which the hearings will continue likewise reduces attractiveness of such broadcasts to potential sponsors. Yet to be scrupulously fair to the participants, live coverage morally commits a network to carry the proceedings in full. And live coverage is eminently more desirable than tape or film recordings. "It is the live quality, the sense of seeing the actual event or the play taking place, in front of your eyes as you sit in your living room, which is the real magic of television," Frank Stanton, president of CBS told a Senate subcommittee in 1954. "Take the live quality out of television and you have diluted its excitement and impact."\(^43\)

On the other hand, the example of the King subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee is evidence of the difficulty of finding suitable broadcast material. The subcommittee was seeking to find out about the activities of Henry W. Grunewald in connection with internal revenue matters—a fairly good "prospect" for broadcast coverage (although the hearing was not broadcast). A total of six hours of hearing time was consumed in executive and public hearings, without getting one word of testimony from the witness. Two public hearings were scheduled, one on December 21, 1951, from 11:35 AM to 12:40 PM

\(^43\) Testimony of Frank Stanton, president, Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc., before Senate Subcommittee No. 2 on Communications, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, June 18, 1954, reprinted for distribution by CBS.
(65 minutes) and the other more than a month later, January 29, 1952, 10:20 AM to 12:45PM (145 minutes). The difficulties of doing justice to the matter under investigation, had the proceedings been broadcast, are obvious. Even had the witness been cooperative, few listeners could have remembered from one month to the next what had gone before.

Interruption in continuity of hearings, and irregular broadcast periods, are common to the conduct of Congressional committees. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on State Department employee loyalty investigations in 1950 demonstrate the problem that television and radio broadcasters face in attempting to achieve continuity in broadcasting a hearing. The hearings began on March 8, ran two days, then recessed for four, ran two more days, before recessing for six, and so on during all of March, April, May and June of that year. The impossibility of keeping audiences interested in an investigation which included thirty-one hearing dates spread over a four-month period should require no elaboration. The contribution to public information, in consequence, could only be nominal.

On the other hand, there is sharp opposition to the idea of "editing" hearings, or carrying only significant portions on a live basis, on the grounds that a distorted picture might be presented. Morris Novik, a radio-television consultant and former MBN director, stressed

this point during a symposium at the 23rd Institute for Education by Radio and Television in Columbus, Ohio, in 1953. Novik emphasized the fact that broadcasters under the rules of the Federal Communications Commission have a responsibility to present all sides of an issue. The solution, he thought, was to handle hearings in the same way that other special events are handled, working out details of coverage with the committee chairman in advance of the hearing, apportioning time on the air equitably among the participants, etc.—in effect, making the hearing broadcast a "staged event" to insure fairness. He would require that "every station carrying the program must agree to carry the full program and, if it is a series, every program in the series." On the same panel, Edward Stanley, NBC manager of public service programs, attacked the Novik proposal on the grounds that it gave the network a legislative responsibility it should not possess and destroyed its legitimate news function as an objective reporter of events. "We become part judge, and the broadcast becomes an artificial thing," Stanley contended.

The problem resolves itself to what is a "fair and accurate report" of a Congressional hearing? Does it require complete and unedited coverage from start to finish, of every committee hearing, as Senator Wallace F. Bennett and his supporters contend? Senator Bennett tes-


47 Ibid., p. 54.
tified before the Senate Subcommittee on Rules in 1954 that "since it is impossible or at least impractical to broadcast all Senate proceedings on all subjects, any omission distorts the real picture of the legislative process, is forgotten or at least seldom covered." Such reasoning seems wholly unrealistic. Representative Meader, before the same committee, replied to this argument by calling attention to the fact that "telecasting and broadcasting are far less susceptible to distortion than the second-hand accounts which inevitably must incorporate the reactions and views of human beings." Actually, this position with respect to the problem fails to take into account the fact that more hearings are covered by newsreels than by television cameras, and that the newsreel "edited" versions have received no such criticism. Senator Bennett, as a matter of fact, specifically exempted recording and filming of excerpts of hearing proceedings used exclusively on news broadcasts—his only objection was the possible "distortion" inherent in commercial sponsorship of a committee hearing.

Of far greater significance in imposing restrictions upon broadcasting of Congressional hearings is the factor of competition of interest, among the committees themselves. In the Eighty-Second

48 Bennett, op. cit., p. 70.
49 Representative George Meader of Michigan, ibid., Part 6, p. 389.
50 Congressional Record, pp. 6356-67, May 18, 1954.
Congress, for example, 227 special investigations were authorized. Obviously, it would be impossible to cover all of them, and the problem of selection would be often quite difficult. There is considerable truth to the charge that the sensational would be featured as against the merely important. And if networks were expected to carry a hearing in full, to give the public a fair picture, this would drastically limit the time available for coverage of other Congressional activities of possibly greater importance. We have an excellent example of how this might happen in the case of the Great Debate on foreign policy of 1950-51, involving the decision to send American troops to Europe to implement the North Atlantic Treaty. Here was an issue which Congress itself agreed was of long-range importance to every citizen, and which received extensive coverage in the press. But the Great Debate dragged on too long, reached no climax, and soon was overshadowed by the Kefauver Crime Committee investigations and the Fulbright Committee inquiry into the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Before the Senate debate on NATO was concluded, the Kefauver Crime Committee telecasts had taken the center of the stage, and as far as the public was concerned, the Great Debate had ended. Unfortunate as this result may have been, the blame cannot be limited to television alone. The press was equally guilty. During the same month in which the Crime Committee telecasts made history, leading newspapers commented editorially on the two Senate investigations twice as often
as they did on the Great Debate.  

To a certain extent the problem of selection of what to broadcast, or of competition between two or more events of major significance, resolves itself. Many Congressional hearings lack general interest because of subject matter which is limited in scope, highly technical, or affecting a limited economic or sectional group. Others are purely exploratory in nature, seeking preliminary information which would have little meaning or interest to the general public. Furthermore, the high cost of originating broadcasts of Congressional hearings tends to reduce the number of broadcast possibilities to a bare handful. During the first part of 1955, although House committees were barred to television, there was no such limitation in the Senate. Yet the television industry found little in the way of Senate committee hearings of sufficient importance to justify live coverage.

Of course, if Congress would assume the responsibility of making the decision on what ought to be televised, the broadcasters' problem would be solved. The political implications of such a move, however,

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51 A study of thirty-one leading newspapers revealed that they published 176 editorials on the Kefauver investigations, 177 on the RFC inquiry, and 27 linking the two during March, 1951. "The forums used in the Great Debate included press, committee hearings, and public discussions," with radio figuring prominently in the picture. The public had every opportunity to know what was happening—but turned to the Kefauver telecasts instead.—George F. Simmons, "How Great the Great Debate?" Journalism Quarterly, pp. 351-57, Summer, 1951.

would far outweigh the inconvenience facing the broadcaster in making his selection. Congressional control of editorial selection inspires reasonable fears that politics would dictate every decision. A Democratic Speaker of the House, for example, could not be expected to allocate television time to a committee seeking to expose corruption and inefficiency of a previous Democratic administration, nor would a Republican Speaker favor publicity for a committee chairman seeking to embarrass the Administration by challenging presidential authority and the wisdom of Administration policies. In any event, there would be nothing to prevent a committee chairman from scheduling witnesses for partisan or publicity effect in the course of a televised hearing, just as he does now. The dangers of political control are valid, but the problem concerns the integrity of the legislative body and is not capable of solution by broadcasters. Political control need not become a serious obstacle to the acceptance of legislative broadcasting, provided Congress wishes to prevent such control, for there are various ways by which it might be avoided. As long as broadcasters have the final determination on whether to cover a Congressional proceeding or not, the danger of "politics" in the initial decision is minimized.

**Sponsorship codes**

In spite of the objections of a significantly large number of Senators that sponsorship of Senate proceedings destroys the dignity and prestige of that august body, and opens up a Pandora's box of evil influence, sponsorship of legislative broadcasts offers the only
reasonable solution to the all-important cost problem. The precedent is well-established.

The United Nations encouraged broadcasting of its proceedings by allowing sponsorship under certain requirements, the most important of which was that sponsors be selected with due regard "to the dignity and prestige of the United Nations." In addition, the UN Code for Commercial Sponsorship provided:

1. Sponsors use institutional type copy;
2. Sponsors do no direct selling;
3. Sponsors use no middle commercial;
4. Promotional publicity to be in keeping with institutional character of the sponsorship;
5. UN reserves the right to check commercial copy from time to time; and
6. In cases of local sponsorship, the UN Radio will rely on the station management to ensure the observance of these provisions. In case of network programs, the arrangements will be approved by UN Radio for each program or series.

Eisenhower's inauguration as President of the United States was made available for commercial sponsorship on somewhat more lenient terms. All commercials were banned during the oath-taking ceremonies, and all televising and radio broadcasting from the Capitol itself could be presented only on a sustaining basis. The only limitations on sponsorship were that the type of client be approved in advance,

53 Radio Daily, p. 8, October 14, 1952.
commercial messages be in good taste and originating at "points remote from the Presidential Reviewing Stand". Banned also were super-imposed commercial messages or trade names using the Capitol or Presidential Reviewing Stand as background in the case of the television broadcasts.  

Sponsorship of the political conventions in 1952 was subject to the provisions of the following code:

(1) The type of sponsor shall be approved by the political parties;  

(2) Commercial messages may be made only during recesses or during periods of long pauses during the actual convention proceedings;  

(3) Commercial messages must meet the highest standards of dignity, good taste and length;  

(4) No commercial announcements may be made from the floor of the convention; and  

(5) There shall be a disclaimer made at the beginning and end of each broadcast period. This disclaimer shall make perfectly clear two points: (1) that the client is sponsoring the network's coverage of the event; (2) that sponsorship by (Blank) company of the (Blank) network's coverage does not imply in any manner an endorsement of the product by the political party. All commercial announcements shall be written, programmed and delivered in such a way as to be clearly and completely separated from convention proceedings, political parties, issues and personalities.

The Army-McCarthy hearings—the only precedent for nation-wide sponsorship of legislative broadcasts on a television network—were

54 *Broadcasting-Telecasting*, p. 25, December 1, 1952.  
originally carried on a sustaining (non-sponsored) basis. Midway through the hearings, the Senate subcommittee voted to permit sponsorship, "in recognition of the value and service of live coverage of the committee hearings as we have observed the results." The only stipulation was that the hearings must be carried in their entirety without interruption by commentary or commercials "and that the name of the sponsor may be given at the opening and close of hearing sessions and during official recesses." The committee also specified the kind of commercial: "these hearings are being brought to you in their entirety without commentary as a public service under the sponsorship of (name of sponsor)." While no qualification was made by the committee as to what would constitute an acceptable sponsor, committee members "hoped" that the networks would exercise good judgment in the selection.56

The unusual circumstances surrounding the Army-McCarthy hearings aroused speculation as to the motives of the committee in permitting sponsorship—whether NBC's decision to drop the hearings on a live basis after the second day, and the limited coverage given the hearings by DuMont and CBS, might not have inspired the move in the hope of securing increased coverage. There is no evidence, however, that such was the case, and if it were, it failed to achieve the expected result, at the network level at least. There was a slight increase in the number of stations taking the ABC telecast, and more stations carried the proceedings in full that had been the case previously. As

of ten days before the end of the hearings, only seventeen stations had availed themselves of the opportunity to carry the hearings on a sponsored basis.\footnote{Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 9, June 7, 1954.} Indications were strong that the hearings were too controversial for the taste of the possible sponsors, and they did not wish to become associated with the dispute in the public mind—a factor which might be extremely important in the future of legislative broadcasting.\footnote{Jack Gould, "Public Service," The New York Times, Section X, p. 11, June 13, 1954.}

The Senate Crime Investigating Committee in 1951 drafted a proposed sponsorship code which it recommended for adoption by other Congressional committees, but its proposal was not acted upon. It is significant, however, that the Committee recognized the financial burden of hearing coverage and possibly may have established the general policy which will govern future hearing broadcasts:

Unlike most public interest programs, a Congressional hearing if fully broadcast, occupies long periods of time, often extending over several days. During this period, a radio or television station or network, in order to carry the hearings, is required to cancel all of its regular commercial programs. This involves not only the loss of revenue but also, in some cases, the payment of cancellation penalties. Seldom can a station or network afford to bear this enormous financial burden.\footnote{Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 72, September 10, 1951.}

Assuming that the Crime Committee policy is acceptable to the majority of Congressmen favoring Congressional broadcasts, this would
prescribe a particular formula for broadcast coverage: (a) that hear­nings should be carried in full, wherever possible, and (b) if carried in full, sponsorship should be permitted.

Sponsorship of House or Senate proceedings, on the other hand, present quite a different problem, but one which should not be im­possible of solution. Understandably, members of Congress are horri­fied at the prospect that their debates might go out to the people of America through the courtesy of this beer or that medicinal preparation, fearing that the mere fact of sponsorship would be interpreted by many listeners as Congressional or personal endorsement of the product.60 On the other hand, strict sponsorship codes can insure good taste and a high calibre of sponsorship which would not detract from the dignity of the proceedings. The fact that the Kefauver Crime Committee tele­casts were sponsored by a national news magazine, and that the Army­McCarthy hearings found sponsors in some instances among leading metropolitan newspapers, weakens the argument that sponsorship would open the door to unrestricted "commercialization" of Congress. Senator Bennett made a point of the "fact" that once the door has been opened, "the Senate has no control over who chooses to pick up the sponsorship".61 This is patently untrue in view of the experience with UN broadcasts,

60 Congressional Record, pp. 8083-84, June 18, 1954.

61 Most Congressmen would be sympathetic to Representative Celler's remark that "I do not want to make a speech on the floor and before a speech have some commercial saying I should take a laxative." Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 81, April 7, 1952.
the presidential inauguration, and the political conventions.

Actually, Congressional opposition to sponsorship of legislative business is an index of opposition to broadcasting or televising of these proceedings, rather than a valid argument. This was quite evident from the testimony of Senator Bennett before the Senate Rules subcommittee. The Senator's bill, Senate Resolution 249, outlawing sponsorship of broadcasts of Senate committee proceedings, was one of the measures under discussion in the committee. After he had dwelt at length on the evils of commercialization, Senator Bennett was asked by one of the committee members: "As I understand the purpose of the resolution, it is not to prohibit broadcasting of Senate committee proceedings but to make certain that such broadcasting is not sponsored." "That is right, Senator," Bennett replied. "Nevertheless," said Senator Hayden, "the arguments that you make really condemn all broadcasting." And Bennett agreed, arguing that "we should not expose the operations of Senate committees as such, doing their regular job, to television broadcasting with no restriction." 62

Overcoming Congressional objections

There is no denying the fact that the stubborn opposition of some of the most influential Senators and Representatives in Congress constitutes a formidable obstacle to the acceptance of any legislative broadcasting program. But it also is true that there is nothing in

62 Bennett, op. cit., p. 73.
most legislative broadcasting proposals which have been advanced in Congress that would make the idea attractive to Congressmen. Advocates of Congressional broadcasting, and representatives of the broadcasting industry in particular, have talked about the need of the public to know what their Congressmen are doing, how much the public enjoyed the Kefauver and Army-McCarthy spectacles, and why television should be given full equality with the press. Unfortunately, none of these points is likely to appeal to the average member of Congress.

What advantage does legislative broadcasting offer the Congressman? What does he have to gain from having Congress "on the air" that will effectively counterbalance the obvious personal annoyances of legislating in a fishbowl? The disadvantages of broadcasting and televising Congressional proceedings have been outlined in detail, and recognized by the members of both Houses. Yet, instead of trying to provide reasonable answers to the questions raised by the opposition, proponents of legislative broadcasting have merely questioned the right of Congress to limit access of radio and television to its proceedings. Such tactics are hardly calculated to create a more favorable climate of opinion in Congress.

To secure Congressional approval, common sense argues that legislative broadcasting must serve some need of Congress, as well as of the public; that Congress as a whole, and its individual members, must see some specific advantage to be gained, in a political sense. Furthermore, some specific proposal should be offered for consideration.
---a proposal which clearly offers the means of fulfilling this need and which holds an obvious appeal to the self-interest of individual members.

The task at best will not be an easy one. But without some effort being made to win over recalcitrant Congressmen, there is little hope for an early solution to the legislative broadcasting problem.

The conflict of the collective versus the individual interest

In addition to the outspoken objections of a minority of Congressional leaders, largely representative of the older school of politician, the composition of Congress itself obstructs acceptance of Congressional broadcasting. Representative Meader and a number of other Congressmen have emphasized repeatedly the urgent need of Congress for more publicity of its activities to restore a measure of lost prestige and to balance the information leadership assumed by the executive branch. In this Meader echoes the thinking of numerous legislative experts, including Galloway, Griffith and others, who have urged the adoption of a Congressional public relations program. But, as pointed out earlier in this discussion, Congress is composed of 532 individuals. Congressional leadership is lacking. Each member has his own problems of serving a local rather than a national constituency. He has a natural desire for re-election and a corresponding interest in any means by which he, personally, can more effectively maintain contact with the voters of his district. Dahl makes a special point of observing that politics tends to maximise the values
Thus the Congressman is inclined to be much less interested than is the political theorist in stimulating greater participation in government on the part of citizens, or expanding public information with this end in view. In a practical sense, the fewer active voters there are the simpler it is for the legislator to establish and maintain contact with them, and the easier it is for him to become re-elected. To a large degree the political interests of each Congressman are different from the collective interests of the entire assembly. Even party discipline breaks down when it conflicts with the personal political fortunes of the individual member.

Unless he is exceptionally ambitious, the interest of the average Congressman in building Congressional prestige extends to his home state—and no farther. He can see little practical value in having his remarks aired in any other forty-seven states, or in having his constituents hear debates on matters which apply more directly to other parts of the country. For all practical purposes, the individual Congressman already has at his command means for communicating with his constituents far more satisfactorily and effectively than would be possible through any form of legislative broadcast. By means of the Congressional Broadcasting Facilities he may make regular reports to his constituents for distribution to radio and television stations in his home district. By reporting directly to the voters in this fashion,
the legislator is able to provide the kind of information he wants his constituents to have, in his own way, without the necessity of competing with his colleagues for attention. In many essential respects, the influence of this "localism" is more of a detriment to the establishment of a program of Congressional broadcasting than is outright opposition. Localism subordinates the national welfare to that of the local community, and glorifies the legislator in the eyes of his constituency at the expense of the legislative body of which he is a part. More pertinently, localism promotes a form of indifference and a disregard of the interests of the national "public" in its Congress, weighing against the initiation of any affirmative policy on the part of Congress.

The establishment of a Congressional "policy" toward broadcasting

From the foregoing certain salient facts emerge to provide a relatively sound basis for future action in promoting a plan for Congressional broadcasting. In the first place, it is apparent that radio and television broadcasting involves a complex set of relationships between networks, stations, advertisers, and the public. As a commercial enterprise, the broadcasting network and station are limited in the extent of the "public service" they can provide, even for such a supposedly worthwhile endeavor as Congressional broadcasts. Commercial sponsorship becomes a key factor in any proposal involving substantial amounts of broadcast time, just as audience interest is the ultimate determiner as to how much of any program material a station will carry. Congress is an equally complex organization,
Involving relationships among its members, political parties, constituents, and other branches of government. Differences between the two Houses, between committee functions, and between the "national" and "local" interests of individual members complicate any discussion of an overall "Congressional" policy or program of action.

A major part of the confusion surrounding the Congressional broadcasting issue in the past has arisen from a general lack of understanding of the complexities of Congress on the one hand and the broadcasting industry on the other. Yet, with even a superficial appreciation of the limitations imposed upon the legislative broadcasting idea by inherent features of Congress and the broadcasting media, it is possible to reconcile the legislative process and the communication system in terms common to both.

Regardless of such factors as the influence of "localism" and "Old Guard" opposition to innovation, the majority of members of Congress are well aware of the need for a coordinated Congressional public relations program, to enhance their own prestige as well as to develop a better-informed electorate. But radio and television, in their present role in society, have never seemed to offer Congress an opportunity for the kind of "publicity" its members desired.

It is apparent that the broadcasters have followed the line of least resistance in dealing with Congress, unwilling to shoulder any responsibility for regular legislative coverage, yet demanding full rights to cover any proceeding wherever and whenever they chose.
No better tactics could be devised for alienating Congressional affections.

Congress, on the other hand, has persisted in treating every matter of public information, including broadcast news coverage, as a political affair, subject only to the established and honored "rules" guaranteed each House by the Constitution. The stubborn opposition of men of the calibre of Sam Rayburn of Texas and Wallace Bennett of Utah is hardly conductive to the voluntary offer of network program time to Congress in assisting the legislative body should Congress one day desire to make affirmative use of television in its informing or legislative functions.

None of the limitations inherent in Congress or in the broadcasting media is such as permanently to restrict the development of Congressional broadcasting. But the limitations upon legislative broadcasting cannot be ignored. They are real and require full consideration.

A change in the present state of affairs is not impossible if an effective compromise can be worked out which will be satisfactory alike to Congress and the broadcasting industry. Willingness to compromise, however, would be of little value unless accompanied by the acceptance by both groups of mutual responsibilities for public information.

The key to acceptance of a policy of Congressional broadcasts
is cooperation and "shared" responsibility. Only through the development of close cooperation between Congress and broadcasters can legislative support become feasible. Once the basis for cooperation is firmly established, the working out of details of broadcast coverage would be a relatively simple affair.
CHAPTER VII

PATTERN FOR THE FUTURE

Today, more than ever before in American history, there is need of intelligent participation by the citizen in the processes of government. With the hope of the free world centered upon the United States, the successful operation of the American political system assumes world-shaking significance. To an alarming degree, in the opinion of many political scientists, the fate of the world rests with the American voter. He is expected to register his will in determination of policies affecting the very existence of nations of which he has often never heard, and about which he knows little if anything. The implications of world leadership by a nation governed by public opinion are frightening to most competent observers.

Political theorists have analyzed the problem from every conceivable angle, but cannot escape the persistent conclusion that only two alternatives are possible. Either the citizen's role in government must be limited to the exercise of control over matters within his present competence and experience, or every effort must be made to increase his competence. While the major "experts" on public opinion may argue in favor of restricting the citizen's role to those actions which require little or no information, such thinking is inconsistent with the facts of the present political environment. The American voter possesses political power and may, on occasion, wield
a decisive influence in the determination of national policy. It is unrealistic to assume that any legal limitation could be imposed upon this power of the citizen. Therefore, since he will exercise this power in any case, the all-important question is whether he will act wisely and intelligently on the basis of adequate information and knowledge, or whether he will act in ignorance. The only reasonable course is to use every possible means to insure his competence.

This is the practical basis for all of the theories of public information in a democracy. Upon this assumption the political leaders of early America attempted to "educate" the American people in the duties of citizenship. This same theory governed the development of the "news" function of the press, and the continuing struggle of the nation's newspapers for the right of access to government proceedings to report the "public" business as they saw fit. As the activities of government expanded and the volume of news taxed human capacities of absorption, the first hesitant and indeterminate expressions of a government obligation to inform had their basis in the idea that there was merit in information as a prelude to increased political "competence" of the voter. Recognition of the need for increased participation of the electorate in the political process assumed "intelligent" participation. As a result, "information" became almost an end in itself, a "right" assured every citizen and the primary raison d'être of the mass communications media. The cult of information had profound political implications, as well. Within a relatively short span of years after the founding of the
Republic, no politician dared uphold, publicly, the practical merit to be derived from secret deliberations, or to oppose in any open fashion the public demand for "news".

Yet, from the time that radio and television appeared on the American political scene, Congress has consistently obstructed the full use of these media as instruments of political education. For twenty-five years, from 1922 to 1947, Congress received repeated proposals that its debates and proceedings be broadcast to the American people. Without according the measures the dignity of a vote, every proposal was brushed aside by Congress. Then, in 1948, television entered the political arena and was, at first, well received by the American politician. The experience of the Kefauver Crime Committee telecasts and the Army-McCarthy hearings provided ample evidence of the smashing impact of the new medium upon the voter, and offered a potent example of how Congress might make use of the medium to enhance its own public relations as well as provide valuable political education for the voter.

But Congress received the new medium with suspicion and distrust. Today, eight years after the first legislative broadcast, and nearly four years since the Kefauver investigations electrified the nation, television's role in legislative affairs is still undetermined. If anything, the possibilities of broadcasting are losing ground in the face of a growing opposition in Congress to legislative broadcasting in any form whatever.
The play of forces which produced the present situation has been outlined in detail in earlier chapters. But as important as an understanding of the origin of present attitudes may be, it still does not provide a solution to the problem. To arrive at such a solution requires the correlation of all of the factors pertinent to this discussion as a basis for predicting the pattern of the future.

**The effect of the doctrine of "pitiless publicity"**

As the history of the development of the public information and the America press so effectively demonstrates, Congress has traditionally been regarded as an object of suspicion by the press. Where legislators in the early nineteenth century sought to use the press in a positive effort to inform the public, the press quickly asserted its independence, resenting any government interference with "freedom of the press". The emphasis placed by the press upon exposing political chicanery on the part of the nation's legislators created an atmosphere of mutual antagonism between Congress and the press which persists today.

Congress, instead of attempting to strengthen its relations with the public, quickly learned that the best defense against publicity is secrecy. Since the proceedings on the floor could not be carried on in secret, both Houses commenced to conduct more and more of their deliberations behind the closed doors of their committee rooms. Congressional debates paled to insignificance and are today such a small part of the legislative business that they no longer serve any
important purpose. While the decline of the legislative debate cannot be attributed wholly to a desire to escape the all-seeing eye of the press, it is significant that the transfer of business to the standing committees was not accompanied by an extension of the privilege of access to committee sessions.

The authority for Congressional actions is parliamentary usage upon which the rules of both Houses are based. As Wilson remarked so many years ago, "habit grows fast. . . and the nature of the House of Representatives has, by long custom, been shaped to the spirit of its rules." The same would apply equally to the Senate. In keeping with tradition, neither the press nor radio or television enjoys any "right of access" to the halls of Congress, but are granted this special "privilege" by each House individually, at the beginning of each session of the national legislature. The absence of a rule specifically granting a parliamentary privilege becomes as effective as an outright prohibition, in withholding that privilege. The legislative broadcasting question ran afoul of this snag at the time of the Rayburn ban on broadcasting in 1952, and still must cope with it before legislative broadcasting can be accepted by Congress. Speaker Rayburn made this point quite clear in explaining his ban to the officials of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters:

There is no rule of the House authorizing or permitting me to grant the privilege of radio broadcasting or tele-

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vising the sessions of the House of Representatives. . .
this would also cover proceedings in sessions of Subcom-
mittees or Special Committees.

I do not want my action to be interpreted as discriminatory
against broadcasting. There was no radio correspondents'
gallery in the House of Representatives until a rule was
adopted providing for it. . .

As in case of voting for a gallery for broadcasters and
giving them ample space in the Capitol, if the broad-
casters and television people desire a provision in the
rules authorizing radio and television they have their
remedy by asking the Committee on Rules to report an
amendment to the Rules of the House.2

What Rayburn omitted to mention is the fact that the Speaker dominates
the House Rules Committee, even though he is not technically a member.
Its members must be personally acceptable to him. Just as the Speaker-
ship is a partisan office, so the Rules Committee is a wholly partisan
committee with its members drawn primarily from the majority party.
As a result in the House, at least, no bi-partisan proposal for legis-
lative broadcasting would be politically feasible, as long as the
attitude of the Speaker remains as it is today. Past experience has
shown the greatest support for legislative broadcasting originating with
the minority party. Furthermore, the Rules Committee of the House has
the power of determining which measures before the House will be de-
bated, and the order in which they will be taken up. Accordingly,
the Rules Committee serves not only as the seat of traditional re-
sistance to publicity and innovation, but as the body through which
all details of actual broadcasting would have to be cleared. There is

2 Broadcasting-Telecasting, p. 29, March 17, 1952.
no comparable situation in the Senate, although the Senate Rules Committee would likewise have the power to modify changes in rules to permit broadcasting, and would have jurisdiction over facilities and arrangements for broadcasting all proceedings.

The doctrine of "pitiless publicity" long established by the press in its dealings with Congress has had indirect though very substantial, effects upon Congressional attitudes toward broadcasting. Congressmen are fond of mentioning the "misunderstanding" and "unfair impressions" that would be the result of televising a House or Senate debate with the camera showing large numbers of empty seats, leading the viewer to conclude that his Representative was not "working". The attitudes of many Congressmen were conditioned by fear of public repercussions arising from telecasts of the Army-McCarthy hearings. Representative Rogers of Florida, for example, feared that viewers would conclude that the operations of all committees "are carried on in such a manner" and that this "is not a healthy situation".³

From similar statements of opinion by other Congressmen, it is plain that the usefulness of legislative broadcasting is not too well understood by the national legislators and than many members of both House and Senate lack confidence in the integrity and good intentions of television newsmen. Many Congressmen apparently assume that broadcasters would deliberately attempt to portray them personally,

³ Congressional Record, p. 7555, June 10, 1954.
and Congress as a whole, in the worst possible light. Under the circumstances, therefore, proposals for Congressional broadcasting are received with the deepest suspicion.

If, as practical politicians, Senators and Representatives see legislative broadcasting only in a political light, and are unable to conceive of a non-political, informational role to be played by the broadcasting media, a large share of the blame can be laid at the door of broadcasters themselves. While industry spokesmen have been extremely vocal in their opposition to proposed measures restricting broadcast "rights," they have been much less active in explaining the role of broadcasting in the information process and in attempting to clear up Congressional misunderstanding. Nor have broadcasters shown any real appreciation of the point of view of the politician in Congress or expressed any desire to cooperate with Congress in trying to solve the problem of possible "misrepresentation". By constantly demanding equal treatment with the press as "news media," the broadcasting industry has deliberately courted the same Congressional distrust that the doctrine of "pitiless publicity" has produced, over the past one hundred years, in the relations between Congress and the press. The unique informational role which the electronic media may play in the democratic process through Congressional broadcasts, has never been fully explained to the parties most immediately concerned, the Congressmen themselves. And since Congress is the agency which will make the final decision on legislative broadcasting, the importance of improving Congressional understanding and resolving
some of the confusion with regard to radio and television becomes obvious.

Requirements of the present situation

The history of Congressional relations with the press and with the broadcast media demonstrates clearly how the free flow of information and public understanding of government have been impaired by the absence of a Congressional policy concerning public information. Since legislative broadcasting offers the greatest promise yet expressed in furthering public understanding of government, the absence of a Congressional policy of public information assumes even greater significance.

As seen in a previous chapter, some of the main stumbling blocks in the way of acceptance of radio and television coverage of legislative affairs can be traced to the failure of Congress to accept a responsibility for public information. Absence of an information policy served to limit serious consideration of legislative broadcasting proposals for more than thirty years, and permitted the executive branch of government to assume the lead in public information, largely through the use of the broadcasting media.

Therefore, the first requirement for making legislative broadcasting a reality is the establishment of an over-all Congressional policy with respect to broadcasting, if not with respect to information as a whole. Such a policy would be essential as a prelude to any future program of public relations by Congress in any case, and
is a necessary first step in clarifying the role of broadcasting in the legislative process. Even if it did no more than set forth Congressional attitudes in the most general way, some sort of published policy is long over-due.

From a review of historical factors relating to Congress and public information, limitations of parliamentary practice and the organization of Congress, the most feasible type of broadcast policy would appear to be one which simply enumerated the particular aims of broadcast information as seen by Congress, as well as defining, in a general fashion, the main lines of Congressional responsibility for public information. A policy statement of this kind, no matter how brief or general, would serve to guide future conduct of broadcasters and of Congress alike, possibly with the effect of eliminating some of the abuses of the publicity-seeking committee hearing.

But the formulation of a policy with respect to broadcasting is not enough to meet all of the needs of the situation. Congress will be under unremitting pressure in years to come to permit the televising of various of its activities. The extent of public interest in many of the Congressional broadcasts of the past gives one reason to believe that Congress will not long refuse to take advantage of the public relations possibilities of the broadcasting media. The question which must be answered is not whether television should have "access" to the floors of Congress and to proceedings of Congressional committees, but how Congress can make the most effective use of the medium
in furthering its legislative ends.

Even assuming the adoption of a specific policy approving legislative broadcasting, Congress is handicapped by the lack of any central authority responsible for coordinating its informational activities, or for administering whatever policy may be established with respect to Congressional broadcasts. Under existing rules and patterns of organization in the two Houses, responsibility is highly decentralized. As noted previously, the power to authorize or to prohibit legislative broadcasting in the House of Representatives rests with a single man, the Speaker. But at least in theory, the responsibility for deciding the conditions under which broadcasts from the floor of the House might be carried on lies with the House Rules Committee. And until the Rayburn ban was imposed, each House committee, individually, determined both the amount and the kind of publicity to be allowed with respect to its own hearings. In the Senate, the Senate Rules Committee presumably has the authority to permit broadcasts of Senate proceedings, and to determine the conditions under which such broadcasts might be carried on. With respect to hearings of Senate committees, the same basic situation exists as in the House of Representatives; each committee chairman enjoys wide latitude in matters relating to publicity of the activities of his committee. So instead of any one agency being responsible for the planning and conduct of possible telecasts of Congressional proceedings or of the hearings of Congressional committees, there are literally dozens of different committees which might exercise control over such broadcasts.
With no single body able to decide what materials would be broadcast, and how broadcasts should be arranged, the job of handling the details of live radio or television coverage becomes exceedingly complex, and necessarily less efficient than might be desired. Certainly, under present conditions, Congress cannot receive the benefits from legislative broadcasting which might accrue from advance planning and integration.

Therefore, there is an obvious need for the establishment of some responsible agency for the administration of policy with respect to broadcasting, whether Congress approves legislative broadcasting on a regular or on only an intermittent basis. If any sort of plan for Congressional broadcasting were to be inaugurated, either for the purpose of public relations or as simple "special events" coverage, the creation of a central coordinating authority would be highly desirable, if not imperative.

A "practical" approach to the problem

What specifically would be required? By borrowing liberally from foreign experience with legislative broadcasts, and adopting some of the pertinent suggestions made in Congressional broadcasting proposals over the past thirty years, the most "practical" approach would appear to be the establishing of a Joint Committee of both Houses to function as the "responsible agency" in charge of all broadcasting policy. This committee would be charged with the responsibility of recommending any necessary procedural changes or changes in rules to permit broad-
casting of proceedings or hearings. As a result, the committee would in all probability be answerable to, or work closely with, the Rules Committees of both House and Senate. Since this committee would be dealing with questions of long-range policy, it would be more effective as a Standing Committee which would have continuity of existence from one Congress to the next, rather than as a Select Committee which ordinarily exists only for the duration of a single Congressional session.

As a Standing Committee, this new agency might be assigned the responsibility of supervising the Congressional Broadcasting Facilities, the Radio-TV and Press Galleries of both Houses, and problems of access to Congressional proceedings raised from time to time by radio and television news reporters---matters now controlled by the Senate and House Rules Committees, for the most part without the benefit of any specific policy determination.

Essentially, however, the Joint Committee would logically handle the following functions:

(1) The formulation of an official Congressional "broadcasting" policy, covering routine news reporting by radio and television as well as broadcasts of actual proceedings of either House;

(2) Study of procedures and practices of both Houses affecting the implementation of a Congressional broadcasting policy;

(3) Recommendations for changes in rules or procedures necessary to enhance broadcast coverage of "approved" proceedings;

(4) Development of a Congressional broadcasting "plan",
meeting practical requirements of Congress and the broadcasting industry;

(5) Allocation of broadcast coverage between both Houses and among the various committees;

(6) Scheduling of coverage of important debates, and working out of details as to allocation of time between participants, who would participate, and broadcasting procedure;

(7) Liaison between Congress and the broadcasting industry, being responsible for accrediting of news men, allocation of broadcast facilities, and working out preliminary arrangements with network representatives in preparing for legislative broadcasts; and

(8) Recommendations for structural changes in House and Senate Chambers or hearing rooms to allow for "unobtrusive" coverage of legislative events.

Through the creation of a Joint Committee on Public Information (or Broadcasting Policy), Congress would, for the first time, be in a position to inaugurate a full-scale, continuing public relations program. Also it could study, more effectively, the uses of television in political education and coordinate its findings in policy recommendations.

Like other committees, this Joint Committee would always be subject to the control of both Houses, and policies or programs formulated by the Joint Committee would be subject to floor action and debate in each House before being put into effect. But an important advantage of such a committee is that it would centralize responsibility for legislative broadcasting under the direct supervision and control of Congress, thereby answering most of the objections of Congressional critics of
television and radio coverage of debates and committee hearings. At the same time, the committee would provide a useful service to the broadcasting industry in working out the many problems in connection with scheduling and handling of legislative broadcasts, problems which often can only be solved by Congressional action.

**Pattern of action under Joint Committee supervision**

The practical advantages of Joint Committee operation may be seen in the way broadcast coverage might be handled under this arrangement. The initial decision to broadcast might originate in Congress or from within the broadcasting industry, depending upon the circumstances surrounding the broadcast event. Once a procedure was established, however, much of the present "hit-or-miss", spur-of-the-moment coverage of legislative affairs might be eliminated. Assuming for the moment that the Senate was preparing to debate a major foreign policy issue, any Senator would have the privilege of submitting a request to the Joint Committee that the debate on the floor be televised. From this point on, the committee would take over. The first step, presumably, would be to determine whether the debate was of sufficient importance to justify coverage at all; then to seek the approval of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee which would have charge of the debate on the floor. Presumably, with the approval of the Joint Committee and of the Foreign Relations Committee, no further authorization would be required, although in a partisan issue floor leaders of both parties might be consulted. Following the receipt of authority to proceed, the committee would then notify the Washington bureaus of the major
broadcasting networks and press associations.

Details of broadcast coverage would be worked out in conjunction with representatives of the broadcasting industry to determine: (a) whether multi-network coverage was warranted or whether coverage by a single network would suffice, depending upon the importance and duration of the debates; (b) how much broadcast time would be available; (c) which network would handle the broadcast origination; (d) details of sponsorship (if permitted); and (e) advance promotion.

After reaching an agreement with representatives of the networks as to details of coverage, the committee would then be responsible for meeting with the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Senate majority and minority leaders to determine an equitable allocation of time between proponents and opponents of the measure under discussion, to decide which members of the Senate will participate in the broadcast debate, and to outline the main features of the debate itself. It would be up to the committee to insure that the broadcast product provided the proper balance of opposing points of view and was as interesting as possible to the listening and viewing public. The actual procedure for allocation of time is already in common use in the House of Representatives in the Committee of the Whole and under the terms of Special Orders which provide for immediate consideration of certain measures with pre-determined limits upon debate. A similar procedure might be established in the Senate, solely for purposes of broadcast debates, or the little-used "closure rule" might
be applied. There is at least one instance in which both the Senate and the House agreed to a statutory limitation on debate. In the case of the adoption of the Reorganization Act of 1939, both Houses agreed to a maximum of ten hours for debate on the measure, with time to be divided equally between those favoring and those opposing the resolution. It is possible, therefore, for debates in both Houses to be "arranged for broadcast" without any drastic revision in rules or violation of precedent.

The advantages of joint responsibility for Congressional broadcasts, divided between a special Congressional committee and the broadcasting industry, are many. Committee supervision gives Congress the degree of control deemed necessary by opponents of unrestricted broadcasting of legislative proceedings. At the same time, such a committee, having the responsibility for program content, would eliminate much of the criticism of the broadcasting industry for its handling of committee hearings and its emphasis upon coverage of the "sensational" rather than the significant. Having a duly constituted agency of Congress in charge of broadcast arrangements would fix responsibility where it belongs, in Congress, and not upon broadcasters. All things considered, the establishment of a Joint Committee on Public Information seems the only reasonable and practicable solution to the question of Congressional broadcasting.

Prospects for adoption of the Joint Committee "plan"

The establishment of a Congressional policy to govern legislative broadcasting, and the creation of a Standing Committee to administer the policy, meets the technical and practical requirements requisite to the adoption of legislative broadcasting as an important part of the information process. However, as previously mentioned, the initiative must come from outside Congress. Logically, it should originate with the major television networks, since a formal policy of Congressional broadcasting would entail some commitment of broadcast time. To secure maximum acceptance and to insure proper understanding on the part of Congressmen, the initial step should consist of a broadcaster-instigated proposal for a "high level" conference between Congressional leaders of both political parties and spokesmen for the broadcasting industry. The purpose of the conference would be two-fold: to urge the immediate development of a Congressional policy with regard to television, and to suggest the creation of a "responsible agency" to oversee the implementation of the policy, preferably along the lines suggested in the preceding section of this chapter.

The importance of this step cannot be overestimated, since it involves no commitment on the part of either broadcasters or Congress, and has the psychological advantage of seeking nothing for the broadcasters. Spokesmen for radio and television would be advocating only the taking of some positive action by Congress. To strengthen the broadcasters' arguments, Congressional broadcasting would not even be at issue, yet definite indications of broadcaster-interest in the
outcome would be implied as would commitments of network time on some regular basis. The psychological significance of the broadcaster-inspired meeting is that it would seem to be a basic shift of policy on the part of the radio and television broadcasters. Instead of a frontal assault upon Congress to secure the "right of access", broadcasters would be in the unusual position of offering industry cooperation and free time to Congress to use or not use as it saw fit. While there is no assurance that Congress would be convinced and follow broadcasters' recommendations, the conference idea is one which has not been tried previously and might therefore be received favorably even by Congressmen who are generally opposed to the idea of legislative broadcasting.

Of course, there is no assurance of the acceptance of such a proposal, or even that broadcasters would look with favor upon the idea of committee control of broadcasts. However, it is obvious that the broadcasting industry is steadily losing ground in Congress, and that unless some compromise is made there can be no hope for the televising of Congressional proceedings in the immediate future. In a sense, broadcasters would be offering to sacrifice an illusionary "right" of access in exchange for some positive guarantees of limited access. On the other hand, the benefits accruing to broadcasting from a close working relationship with Congress would seem to be well worth the sacrifice. Without the creation of a better understanding of broadcasting problems and of the information potential of the broadcast media, broadcasters will continue to be plagued with legislative
proposals designed to limit their "right of access", to prohibit sponsorship of legislative broadcasts, and to restrict the development of the electronic media as instruments of political education.

**Anticipated results**

Assuming that broadcasters and Congress are able to reach a satisfactory compromise and that approval of a legislative broadcasting plan is secured, how effective would such a broadcast series be? From the standpoint of total audience, it seems only fair to admit that legislative broadcasts would probably never become America's favorite form of entertainment. But there is good reason to believe that such broadcasts might occupy a substantial place in the regular broadcast schedules of the nation's radio and television stations and might well become the leading type of educational programming.

The effectiveness of such a broadcast series would depend upon many things: the extent to which the air waves might be saturated with legislative broadcasts, the importance of the debates or subjects under investigation, and the degree to which Congress might organize its procedure and discussions to make maximum use of the broadcast media.

Leigh and Galloway contend that procedural organization for broadcasting purposes would be an important factor in the success of legislative broadcasting. They suggest the employment of the device of the evening session, to be broadcast twice weekly. One would be a voting session where formal committee reports and votes would be presented in
dignified manner. The other evening would be devoted to Congressional debates on important issues, by special arrangement of a bipartisan steering committee. Participants in the debates would usually be committee chairmen, ranking members of both parties, and others selected by those in charge of debate on specific bills emerging from committee. Leigh observes that "it is not too much to hope that, if well organized, such a selected segment of formal debate in both Chambers might furnish a complement, if not rivalry, to Fireside Chats, Town Hall debates, and University Round Tables."

The role of legislative broadcasting in a democratic society

The ultimate role of legislative broadcasting is yet to be determined. Within the limitations outlined in this discussion, however, television may assume a highly significant role in political education, while serving as an all-important vehicle for Congressional public relations. Certainly the confusion and misunderstanding which have so beclouded the issue should not be permitted to limit the use of the powerful new medium of sight-and-sound to the political campaigner alone. The dramatic possibilities of television offer too much hope for the future to permit legislative broadcasting to be discarded without extensive evaluation and an opportunity to be tested in practice.

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Yet the need for prompt action is daily more evident, while conditions are still favorable. Television has whetted the public appetite for more information about government, and has made government "top" entertainment. Public interest in politics and government is now at the highest point in history, but such interest is transitory and, without prompt action, may be diverted elsewhere. There is a signal advantage in the fact that television is still so new a medium of communication that there are, as yet, no fixed habits of viewing or viewer expectancy. Changes, innovations and additions to television program patterns are still possible without arousing viewer resentment over interrupted program schedules. Once viewing habits become well-established, however, any major changes become more difficult.

Still another argument favoring action in the near future is the rapid increase in political use of television. As members of Congress become more accustomed to the new medium as a vehicle for personal campaigning, they will see less and less value in Congressional television for national objectives.

Congress missed its opportunity with radio broadcasting more than a quarter-century ago, and allowed the executive branch to turn radio into a powerful weapon of Administration publicity. The President now has demonstrated his full awareness of the publicity potential of television. Congress has an equal opportunity for making effective use of television before that medium becomes, by default, the sole "property" of the Chief Executive.
Every year of delay adds to the obstacles in the path of legislative broadcasting. Time is running out, and if no decision is reached soon, the loss may be irreparable to the future of democratic government. The all-important question is whether Congress can be induced to take advantage of the opportunities offered by television and to capitalize on the new-found public interest in governmental affairs, or whether Congress will vacillate and obstruct to the point where public enthusiasm is allowed to die and citizen participation in the political process goes into further decline.
APPENDIX I.

LEGISLATIVE BROADCASTING CHRONOLOGY*

1922

Dec. 8  President Harding’s address to Congress broadcast by Navy radio station at Anacostia and relayed to other parts of the nation, marking first time new voice-amplifying equipment in House of Representatives was connected with wireless.

1923

Dec. 6  President Coolidge made first major broadcast over a national radio network from House of Representatives; carried by six stations: WCAP, Washington, D. C.; WEAF, New York; WJAR, Providence; KSD, St. Louis; WDAP, Kansas City; and WFAA, Dallas.

1925


Mar. 25  Parliamentary inquiry concerning possible broadcasting of proceedings of British House of Commons; question referred to Select Committee for investigation.

1926

Mar. 22  Parliamentary broadcasts discussed in British House of Commons; after report of Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin that “there is a greatly preponderating opinion against broadcasting the proceedings,“ the subject was dropped.

Fall  Finnish Diet (Parliament) broadcast its proceedings.

*Sources: Dunlap, Orrin E., Jr., Radio and Television Almanac (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951); Broadcasting Annual (various dates); New York Times (various dates); Broadcasting-Telecasting magazine (various dates from 1950 to 1955); State Government (various dates).
Radio listeners petitioned German Reichstag to broadcast its proceedings; after considerable discussion, the Reichstag gave its approval.

President Coolidge's Washington's Birthday address before joint session of Congress broadcast -- first coast-to-coast presidential broadcast, carried over an NBC network of 42 stations.

Opening of 73rd Congress broadcast -- first broadcast of proceedings from the floor of the House of Representatives.

Senate committee hearings on airmail broadcast in part, from caucus room of Senate, including interview of Col. Charles A. Lindburgh by Sen. Kenneth D. McKellar of Tennessee.

President Roosevelt delivered veto of Patman Bonus bill to joint session of Congress; broadcast to nation.

Broadcast of President Roosevelt's annual Message, presented before joint session of Congress; Message was presented in evening session, so that nation might listen to the broadcast.

Inauguration of radio broadcasts of proceedings of the New Zealand House of Representatives; all proceedings have been broadcast regularly since that time.

Address of governor of Montana before special session of legislature broadcast by radio stations in that state.
1937 (cont'd)

Jan. 5  Opening of Congress broadcast from floor of House of Representatives by WRAF and WJZ, New York.

Jan. 6  President Roosevelt's Message to Congress broadcast internationally.

Jan. 12  Message of governor of Utah to Utah legislature broadcast over KUTL, Salt Lake City; first legislative broadcast in Utah. Same station carried other broadcasts from the Utah legislature at later dates during the session.

1938

Jan. 3  President Roosevelt read his annual Message to a joint session of Congress; broadcast over 350-station network.

Feb.  WRVA, Richmond, Virginia, carried regular broadcasts from the Virginia legislature, and fed the programs to other stations in the state.

1939

Jan. 4  President Roosevelt's annual Message, presented before joint session of Congress, broadcast nationally.

Apr. 20  Rules of House of Representatives amended to give representatives of broadcasting stations the same privileges as representatives of the press.

Apr. 25  Senate followed example of House, and opened its press gallery to representatives of radio stations.

May 20  Radio gallery of House of Representatives formally opened.

Sept. 21  President Roosevelt's address on the Neutrality Act presented to a joint session of Congress, and broadcast nationally.

1940

May 16  President Roosevelt's Message to Congress, presented before a joint session, broadcast nationally.
1941

Dec. 8  President Roosevelt's War Message to Congress, reporting that a state of war existed with Japan, presented before joint session of Congress and broadcast by all four national networks. Broadcast was later estimated by C. E. Hooper, Inc., radio research agency, to have been heard in 79 per cent of all radio-equipped homes in the United States.

Dec. 11 President Roosevelt's Message asking for declaration of war against Germany and Italy broadcast as it was read in the House and Senate, followed by announcement of the vote on declaration of war.

Dec. 26 Prime Minister Winston Churchill's address to a joint session of Congress, broadcast internationally.

1942

Jan. 6  President Roosevelt's annual Message presented to joint session of Congress, and broadcast.

Oct. 21 First broadcast ever permitted from floor of British House of Commons, including addresses by Prime Minister Churchill, David Lloyd George, and General Jan Smuts.

1943

May 19  Prime Minister Churchill's address before joint session of Congress broadcast nationally. One radio research agency, C.A.B., reported a 'rating' of 37.0.

1944

Dec.  WMCA, New York, inaugurated a series of dramatized "reconstructions" of Congressional proceedings based on text of the Congressional Record, following refusal by Congress to permit the station to pick up the proceedings 'live,' from the floor.

1945

Apr. 13  President Truman's address to joint session of Congress broadcast internationally.

Apr. 16  President Truman's address to joint session of Congress, calling for national unity, broadcast.
1945 (cont'd)

Oct. 23  President Truman's address before joint session of Congress broadcast.

Nov. 13  Broadcast of address of Prime Minister Clement R. Attlee of Great Britain, before joint session of Congress.

1946

Jan. 15  First television pickup from the interior of the Capitol at Washington, of President Truman's presentation of his annual Message to Congress. Television broadcast carried over stations WNBT, WARD and WCBS-TV in New York, WJWT in Washington, WPTZ in Philadelphia, and WBGB in Schenectady.

Mar. 25  Opening session of United Nations Security Council at Hunter College in New York televised over WNBT, including addresses by Secretary of State Byrnes and by Governor Dewey of New York. WNBT also telecast other sessions of the Security Council.

July  Australia inaugurated regular network radio broadcasts of proceedings of its Parliament.

1947

Jan. 3  First television broadcast of regular proceedings of either House of Congress, when opening sessions of the House of Representatives were telecast by stations WNBT, WARD and WCBS-TV in New York, WTTG in Washington, and WPTZ in Philadelphia. President Truman viewed the telecast from his desk in the White House. Opening ceremonies of the Senate not telecast, although top news of the day was provided by the row over the seating of Senator Bilbo. The opening was that of the 80th Congress.

Jan. 6  President Truman's address to joint session of Congress televised.

Mar. 12  President Truman's Message to joint session of Congress televised.
1947 (cont'd)

Oct. 5  President Truman's address on world food crisis broadcast internationally by radio and televised over a 7-station hookup, as first television pickup from the White House.

Nov. 17 President Truman's message on relief to Europe, presented to joint session of Congress, telecast by stations along Atlantic seaboard and broadcast by radio on world-wide basis.

1948

Jan.  Opening of the 81st Congress televised.

Jul. 31-
Sept. 9  Television and radio broadcasts of Hiss-Chambers hearings before House Committee on Un-American Activities.

1949

--  Broadcasts by radio of proceedings of both Norwegian and Danish Parliaments inaugurated, with proceedings broadcast at frequent intervals throughout year, and continuing to present date.

Jan.  Opening of 82nd Congress filmed for television broadcasting.

Jan. 20  Ceremonies relating to inauguration of President Truman telecast over a network of 34 stations in 16 cities from Boston to St. Louis, with estimated audience of 10 million viewers. First telecast of the inauguration of a President of the United States.

1950


Aug. 1  United Nations Security Council discussions relating to Korean situation televised from Lake Success.

1951

Jan. 9  Opening session of Utah Legislature televised by KSL-TV.
1951 (cont'd)

Jan. 15  Telecast of annual budget message presented by Governor of Georgia to joint session of the Georgia Legislature.

Jan. 16  Inauguration of regular twice-weekly telecasts of proceedings on floor of Oklahoma Legislature, carried by WKY-TV.

Jan. 25- June 22  Hearings of Senate Crime Investigating Committee televised in eight cities. Hearings in New York City, St. Louis and Washington, D. C., broadcast by stations on national network. Hearings held in New Orleans, Detroit, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Miami telecast locally.

Apr. 19  General MacArthur's address to joint session of Congress televised and carried over national network. Audience Research Bureau, Inc., estimated that an audience of 18.6 million persons in six million homes saw the telecast. Program was tuned in by 60 per cent of all TV homes in Washington, 52 per cent in Chicago, 44 per cent in New York City.

Sept. 4- Sept. 8  Coast-to-coast television network service inaugurated with broadcast of President Truman's address before Japanese Peace Treaty Conference in San Francisco. Trendex estimated audience at 11,670,000, and that telecast was tuned in in 50.1 per cent of all television-equipped homes. Following initial broadcast, sessions of the Conference were carried coast to coast on both television and radio networks.

Sept. 20  Hearings of House Committee on Un-American Activities on Communists, held in Los Angeles, televised locally over KTTV.

Nov. 25- Nov. 30  Hearings of Crime Investigating Committee of Washington State Legislature televised locally over KING-TV.

1952

Jan.  President Truman's Message to joint session of Congress broadcast by all national radio and TV networks.
1952 (cont'd)

Feb. 25 Speaker Sam Rayburn imposed ban on all telecasting or radio broadcasting of hearings of House Committees; immediate effect was to cancel plans for telecasts of hearings of House Un-American Activities Committee in Detroit, and to halt further telecasts of investigations of House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee into plane crashes at Elizabeth, N. J.

Feb. Special informal meeting of combined Senate and House Committees on Education of Iowa Legislature telecast by WOI-TV from House Chamber of the legislature.

Spring Debates of German Bundestag broadcast over Suddeutscher Rundfunk, and carried by all West German radio stations.

May 22 General Matthew B. Ridgeway's report to joint session of Congress on conditions in Korea broadcast on nationwide basis on both television and radio.

Oct. Proceedings of the United Nations General Assembly telecast on a regular daily scheduled basis: by NBC television for one hour in the forenoon, by CBS television for one half hour in the late afternoon. WNYC in New York broadcast the proceedings over radio each weekday from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM, and from 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM.

1953

Jan. Speaker-elect Joseph W. Martin of House of Representatives revoked the "Rayburn ban" on broadcasts of House Committee hearings, leaving the question of broadcasting for each Committee to decide for itself.

Jan. First television coverage of hearing of a House committee since imposition of the "Rayburn ban" in 1952; two newreel companies filmed the hearings of the House Armed Services Committee on airplane crashes, and films were later shown on television.

Jan. 15 Inauguration of the Governor of Iowa and presentation of his message to a joint session of the Iowa Legislature televised over WOI-TV, for an estimated 500,000 viewers.
1953 (cont'd)

Feb. 27  Special hearing of New Jersey Legislature's Crime Investigating Committee broadcast by transcription by five New Jersey radio stations.

June 14  Opening session of Legislature of Guam carried over KUAM in Agana, Guam, initiating policy of providing complete radio broadcast coverage of all proceedings of the Legislature, in full — two or three hours daily.

June 29 - July 2  Hearings on labor conditions by Subcommittee of House Committee on Government Operations televised locally in Kansas City, Missouri.

Nov. 13  Testimony of Major General Harry Vaughn before the Senate Internal Security Committee (the Jenner Committee) telecast live by the ABC-TV network, and by use of films by the NBC-TV network.

1954

Apr.  Four-day hearing in San Diego on Communist activities in defense establishments by Subcommittee of the House Committee on Un-American Activities televised by stations in southern California.

Apr. 22 - June 17  Army-McCarthy hearings before the Senate Permanent Investigating Committee carried in full by ABC-TV network, in part by other national television networks.

1955

Jan. 6  President Eisenhower's Message before joint session of Congress televised nationally, and carried by radio short wave to all parts of the world.

Jan.  Speaker-elect Sam Rayburn reimposes ban on broadcasting or telecasting of hearings of House Committees.

Jan. 8  Opening of Canadian Parliament televised from Senate Chamber; the first time that any parliament in the British Commonwealth had permitted the televising of its proceedings.
APPENDIX II.

HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE BROADCAST PROPOSALS*

1922
Feb. 27 House Joint Resolution 278 introduced, providing for
the installation of radio-telephone transmitting appara-
utus for the purpose of transmitting the proceedings
and debates of the Senate and House of Representatives,
and for other purposes.

1924
Mar. 15 Resolution introduced in Rhode Island State Senate
calling for installation of broadcasting equipment in
chamber of that body.

May 2 Senate Resolution 197 reported out by committee and
passed by the Senate, calling for the appointment of a
joint committee to investigate the feasibility of pub-
lie address equipment for the Senate Chamber, and of
facilities for broadcasting Senate proceedings to all
parts of the nation.

1926
Jan. 4 Senator Dill introduced Senate Resolution 92, asking
that the Sergeant at Arms of the Senate provide the desk
of each Senator with equipment for broadcasting Senate
proceedings over regular commercial radio stations.

Jan. Joint committee report on Senate Resolution 197 sub-
mitted to Senate Committee on Rules, declaring that
project for use of public address system was impractical
and that broadcasts of Senate proceedings over stations
of the Army and Navy would require construction of more
than 20 stations at a cost of $3.3 million plus over
$1 million annual upkeep.

*Sources: Files of Congressional Record, New York Times (var-
ious dates); Broadcasting-Telecasting (1950-55); Radio-TV Daily
(1950-55); and Orrin E. Dunlap, Jr., Radio and Television Almanac
1929

Apr. 23 Senator Dill reintroduced resolution of previous session, this time labelled Senate Resolution 36, asking for broadcasting of Senate proceedings.

Dec. 9 Senator Howell introduced Senate Resolution 28, asking for appointment of a special select committee to investigate practicality of broadcasting Senate proceedings.

Mar. 15 Senator Dill reintroduced his resolution of previous sessions, now labelled Senate Resolution 29, again asking for broadcasting of Senate proceedings.

Mar. Senator Pittman introduced Senate Resolution 93, calling for construction of a government-owned radio station for the purpose of broadcasting Congressional debates.

Aug. 14 Representative Coffee introduced House Joint Resolution 80, calling for broadcasting of Congressional proceedings; Senator Pepper introduced a similar measure in the upper chamber as Senate Joint Resolution 115.

Nov. Both the AFL and CIO national conventions passed resolutions favoring the broadcasting of Congressional proceedings.

1945

Mar. 13-June 29 La Follette-Monroney Committee during hearings on reorganization of Congress heard testimony including various proposals for Congressional broadcasts, but took no action on such proposals in its report.

1947

Jan. 8 Senator Pepper reintroduced bill to authorize broadcasting of proceedings of both Senate and House of Representatives.
Representative Javits introduced House Resolution 62, calling for the broadcasting of the more important Congressional debates.

Mar. 27 Senator Wiley introduced Senate Resolution 106, calling for a study of the role of television in relation to Congress.

Apr. 12 Representative Kline introduced a measure providing for the broadcasting of Congressional proceedings over government-owned stations.

1952

Feb. 25 Speaker Rayburn announced a ban on all broadcasts of hearings of House committees.

Feb. 27 Representative Meader introduced House Resolution 510 to amend the rules of the House to authorize committees in their own discretion to permit broadcasting or televising of their hearings.

Senator McCarran introduced Senate Resolution 319, to amend the standing rules of the Senate to provide that no Senate committee could permit radio or television broadcasts, electrical recordings or photographs to be made in any room in which meetings of the committee were taking place.

1952

Jan. Speaker-elect Joseph W. Martin revoked the Rayburn ban on the broadcasting of House committee hearings, leaving the matter for each individual committee to determine.

Jan. 26 Representative Javits introduced House Resolution 2109 providing for the televising and radio broadcasting of proceedings from the floor of the House, and also introduced a bill to amend the Legislative Reorganization Act to provide for the televising of public hearings.

Jan. 3 Representative Hillings introduced House Resolution 21, to amend the rules of the House to permit radio broadcasting, televising or recording of hearings of House committees, under conditions prescribed by the committees conducting the hearings.
1953 (cont'd)

Feb. 10    Senator Kefauver introduced Senate Resolution 10, providing for equal access of all media of information in coverage of Senate committee hearings, subject to physical limitations of space and physical comfort of witnesses, and laying down rules of procedure for Congressional investigations.

Mar. 12    Representative Jarman introduced House Resolution 177, amending Rule XXXIV of the Rules of the House to provide for broadcasting of sessions of the House of Representatives.

Mar. 19    Representative Javits introduced House Resolution 1123 creating rules of procedure for House investigating committees, which would prohibit the broadcasting of photographing of any witness without the consent of the witness.

1954

May 17    Representative Meader introduced House Resolution 550 to amend certain rules of the House and to authorize any House committee, at its discretion, to permit the radio broadcasting and telecasting of its proceedings, and the dissemination of news of such proceedings by other media of mass communication.

May 17    Representative Celler introduced House Resolution 9152 to amend the Communications Act of 1934 by making it unlawful for stations to permit commercial sponsorship of radio or television broadcasts of any official meetings, hearings or other proceedings of committees or subcommittees of either House, except as a part of a regular newscast.

June 1    Representative Scott introduced House Resolution 147, to amend the rules of the House with respect to procedure of investigating committees to provide that "no witness shall be compelled to give oral testimony for broadcast . . . if prior to testifying he demands to be heard without such coverage."
1954 (cont'd)*

June 10  Representative Rogers introduced House Concurrent Resolution 239 providing that no television broadcasts be made of any hearings of Congressional committees. The proposal was limited to committee procedures, and was not intended to affect the televising of the sessions of either House or of joint sessions.

1955*

Jan.  Speaker-elect Sam Rayburn reinstated his ban on the broadcasting of hearings of any House committee.

Jan.  Senator Hemmings introduced Senate Resolution 15, providing that witnesses at Congressional hearings be given the right to refuse to be televised.

Jan. 10  Senate Resolution 17, embodying the recommendations of the 1954 Subcommittee on Rules, introduced in the Senate by the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration; the resolution called for the amending of Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate to permit a witness before a Senate committee to request that television, motion picture and other cameras and lights required by such cameras shall not be directed at him during a hearing; and to provide that such requests be ruled on by the members of the committee.

Jan.  Representative Celler introduced House Resolution 20, providing for equal access of all media of communications to hearings of House committees, subject to physical limitations, and barring the use of television if a witness objects.

Jan.  Representative Kelly introduced House Resolution 12, with provisions identical to those of House Resolution 20, noted above.

Jan.  Representative Celler introduced House Resolution 626, prohibiting commercial sponsorship of broadcasts or telecasts of Congressional committee proceedings except on regularly scheduled news programs.

*Not listed in 1954 and 1955 are several bills to establish codes of fair procedure for investigating committees, including provisions that radio and TV be barred upon request of a witness.
Representative Meader introduced House Resolution 99, giving House committees the right to permit live or recorded broadcasts of their public proceedings.

House Rules Committee rejected a proposal to permit broadcasting and telecasting of open committee hearings.

Senate Resolution 101 introduced by Senator Kefauver and 17 other members of the Senate. The resolution, dealing with "fair committee procedure," provided for equal access to all committee meetings of all media of communication, "subject to the physical comfort of committee members, staff and witnesses." The resolution provided that a witness could avoid being televised, filmed or photographed, if he objects on the grounds of "harassment or physical handicap."

Senate Resolution 22 introduced by Senators Bush and Kuchel, proposing amendment of rules for Senate Committee hearings to prohibit a witness being filmed, televised or photographed, on grounds of distraction, harassment or physical handicap.
APPENDIX III.

TELEvised HEARINGS OF CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES*

Sponsored Broadcasts Carried on National Networks

Senate Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce:

1951 - Hearings on organized crime (sponsored on network by Time, Inc.)

Senate Permanent Investigating Subcommittee:

1954 - Army McCarthy hearings

Programs Carried by Networks on a Sustaining Basis

House Committee on Armed Services:

1949 - Hearings on the B-36 bomber program, H. R. 234

House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce:

1952 - Investigation of air crashes at Newark, N. J.


1 Although the subcommittee authorized sponsorship of these hearings, they were carried by the networks on a sustaining basis; however, in some instances the broadcasts were sponsored locally on individual stations.

2 Although the broadcasts in this group were carried by the networks as sustaining programs, it is possible that some may have been sponsored locally on individual stations.
House Committee on Un-American Activities:

1948 - Hiss-Chambers hearings
1951 - Hearings on Communist infiltration of motion picture industry
1953 - Voice of America hearings
1953 - Hearings on Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam
1953 - Hearings on Dr. M. S. Korowicz, former Polish delegate to the United Nations

House Labor Committee:

1948 - Petrillo hearings

House Select Committee to Conduct an Investigation and Study of the Education, Training and Loan Guaranty Programs of World War II Veterans:

1951 - Hearings

House Select Committee to Conduct an Investigation and Study of the Katyn Forest Massacre:

1952 - Hearings

Joint Committee on Atomic Energy:

1949 - Hearings on the United States atomic energy project

Joint Committee on Defense Production:

1951 - Hearings to receive testimony from Michael V. DiSalle relative to meat production and supply

Joint Committee on the Economic Report:

1952 - Hearings
Senate Appropriations Committee:

1953 - Hearings on cuts in Air Force budget

1953 - Hearings on cuts in Armed Services budget

Senate Committee on Armed Services:

1948 - Hearings on universal military training

1951 - Hearings on the assignment of armed forces of the United States to duty in the European area

1953 - Hearings on shortage of ammunition in the Korean war

1953 - Hearings reviewing President Eisenhower's nominations for new Joint Chiefs of Staff

Senate Committee on Banking and Currency:


1952 - Hearings on the 1952 amendments to the Defense Production Act

1953 - Hearings on stand-by controls bills

Senate Committee on the District of Columbia:

1952 - Investigation of crime

Senate Judiciary Committee - Subcommittee on Internal Security:

1953 - Hearings on Communism in American education

1953 - Hearings on Harry Dexter White

Senate Permanent Investigating Subcommittee:

1953 - Hearings on use of books by Communist authors in United States Information Service libraries

1953 - Hearings on East-West trade problems and on restrictions on trade with Communist China

1953 - Hearings on conspiracy charges against Frank Coe, former International Monetary Fund official
Joint Session of Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and House Committee on Foreign Affairs:

1953 - Hearings on proposed mutual security program and budget
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AUTobiography

I, Robert Edward Summers, was born in St. Joseph, Missouri, on February 25th, 1918. I received my elementary and secondary school education in the public schools of Manhattan, Kansas. My undergraduate training was received at the Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, from which I graduated in 1940 with the degree of Bachelor of Science in Industrial Journalism. From 1940 to the beginning of 1950, I was engaged in professional work in broadcasting for stations KFBI in Wichita, Kansas, and WPAA in Dallas, Texas, and in work in fields related to broadcasting for various concerns in New York City. In January, 1950, I enrolled for graduate work in the University of Texas, and in June of the same year transferred to The Ohio State University for major work in Radio in the Department of Speech. I received the degree of Master of Arts from The Ohio State University in 1951, and continued in residence at the University until September, 1952, completing course and residence requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. From September, 1952, until September, 1955, I was employed as Assistant Professor of Journalism at the University of Oregon and as secretary-manager of the Oregon State Broadcasters Association. In September, 1955, I joined the faculty of the Department of Telecommunications at the University of Southern California with the rank of Assistant Professor.