

**Crisis and Critique: Ideology, Hegemony, and Public Television's Early
Years, 1967-1972**

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As the modern system of public broadcasting enters into its 35th year, citizens, scholars, and media reformers would do well to re-examine its history and the history of its constituent principles and ideologies. On the occasion of public television's official entry into mid-life, the word "crisis" inevitably surfaces – although in public television's case, the rhetoric of crisis has been with the system since its infancy. Indeed, I wonder what future upheavals could top the crises of late-1960s society, Nixon's attack in the early 1970s and public television's "crisis of government" (Ouellette 1999; Aufderheide 1991; Stone 1985)? More recently, Newt Gingrich's proposal to "zero out" public broadcasting (Behrens 1994) sparked a crisis of far greater dimensions than Reagan's effort to commercialize public television in the 1980s. Maybe a better question would be, has public broadcasting already passed through middle age and its "decline and fall" (Tracey 1998)? Does it stand on the threshold of its "death," as one writer recently argued (Ledbetter 1997)?

If "crisis" sometimes connotes pain, instability, and anxiety, we should remember that the word also evokes choice, turning point, potential. Against this moribund discourse of crisis, downfall, and death, my approach to public television is more optimistic – and more realistic. Despite (or because of) its systematic and regular crises, public television is very much alive and very much the site of political, ethical, and civic conflict, and that moreover, it is an indispensable institution for a more democratic society. This essay synthesizes existing historical literature in order to explore the development of the competing ideologies and rationales that circulate throughout the body of public broadcasting. My analysis is in the critical vein of communications political economy. I seek to understand both the internal dynamics of the medium's

structure and this structure's relationship to society in general (Habermas 1989/1962; McChesney 2000). In addition to this analytic perspective, I formulate an orientation which future media reformers should consider in order to re-inject the capacity for Habermasian critique into the system of public television

I approach public television cognizant of the medium's dual components as a cultural form, as Williams pointed out (1975). When we talk about "television," we signify either the practice, the institution, and the technology behind the "tube" or we signify the cultural form – the programs, the streams of images and sounds, the televisual text. This dialectic between form and content, structure and program, frames my analysis of the history of public television up to 1972. My brief concluding reflections address the goal of injecting critique into both dimensions of public television.

In both form and content, the currently dominant rationale by which public television functions is liberal pluralism, a belief system that derives from the professional-managerial class. This ideology was hard-wired into the structure of public broadcasting by the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 and the document on which this legislation was based: the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television's white paper (*Public Television: A Program for Action*). I argue that by materializing this ideology within the system of public broadcasting, the professional-managerial class found a partial solution to the "crisis of legitimacy" (Gramsci 2000) inspired by the radical critiques of the 1960s. However, liberal pluralism is by no means comprehensive or without its own contradictions, and several other subaltern rationales exist within the system of public television. Recent scholarship has emphasized the rationale of "good

citizenship” and public television’s complicity with the goal of sanitizing dissent and forcing criticism into acceptable discourses (Ouellette 1999).

I will focus on another alternative rationale, one that has best been articulated by Jurgen Habermas’s conception of the critical function of the public sphere. I believe Habermas not only provides a compelling explanation for the historical development of one of the crucial, though subordinate, rationales for public television, but he also illuminates a path for future broadcast reform efforts. Scholars and policy and media activists should incorporate Habermas’s notions of criticism if they aim to create a better, more critical future for public broadcasting and a better, more democratic society.

STRUCTURAL HISTORY OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING

The roots of public television’s “crises” descend from its contradictory institutional structure. In November 1967, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Public Broadcasting Act into law, establishing the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). The root of this legislation was the white paper issued by the Carnegie Corporation’s Commission for Educational Television, a panel of distinguished business, educational, and political leaders that Johnson charged with formulating a national public television system (Burke 1979). Before I deal with the Report’s mission statement, I want to summarize what many historians have noted as the ambiguities wired into the system. These formal ambiguities manifest themselves in the content and day-to-day functioning of public television, spawning a confusing medley of programs with contradictory intentions.

Scholars agree that public television’s structural problems basically boil down to three over-arching themes: a conflicting internal structure, an unstable source of funding,

and a politicized administration. Public television's internal structure defies simple characterization, although the words of one frustrated critic provide a glimpse of the system's organizational complexity. According to Tracey (1998), public broadcasting is:

a bizarre combination of both the monolithically bureaucratic and the anarchically fragmented. There is an unwieldy combination of university, state, and local education authority stations serviced by an array of state and regional organizations, all overlain by an indescribably complex national bureaucracy represented by a welter of organizations known as the CPB, PBS, the American Program Service (APB), National Public Radio (NPR), American Public Radio, the National Association of Public Television Stations (APTS), the Children's Television Workshop, and myriad other federal, foundation, and corporate funding and programming agencies (Tracey 1998: 165).

Tracey's comment highlights the interlocking nature of public television's structural problems. The system's contradictory internal layout is confounded by the fact that it does not have a secure, long-term, nonpolitical funding source. Hence the federal government, foundations, and corporations funnel money to the "unwieldy" local stations, while the "welter" of internal organizations confuses and complicates decision-making. Furthermore, as Tracey hints, bureaucracy and the system's political dependencies intensify the other problems.

In the analysis below, I want to focus on the two central "bureaucracies" within public television: the CPB and PBS. The CPB was the institutional answer to two questions: 1) how to avoid creating an outright propaganda machine for the federal government? and 2) how to avoid creating an outright competitor with the commercial networks? In order to create distance between Congress and the new system of public broadcasting, the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 chartered the CPB as an independent, non-governmental agency that would be responsible for managing the Congressional appropriation, so that the federal government would remain distanced from the day-to-

day functioning of public broadcasting. The CPB produced programs for the two noncommercial media systems, television's Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio. These two bodies, not the CPB, effectively functioned as networks, responsible for managing the technical aspect of broadcasting and station interconnection. Thus the central organ of public broadcasting was "thoroughly constrained" (Rowland 1998: 31) in its role as it attempted to avoid governmental interference on the one hand, yet without being able to assert network independence on the other. If public television were to be likened to a theatre company, then the CPB would play the roles of producer, director, and treasurer – yet it would still be prohibited from choosing the venue or the dates of the performance.

This arrangement was consistent with the Carnegie Commission's recommendation to establish a non-profit "corporation" in order to manage the public television system. However, the Carnegie Commission intended for this corporation to be funded by a non-political source of income – an excise tax, similar to the British Broadcasting Corporation. Congress dropped this idea from the final version of the Public Broadcasting Act, which established an annual appropriations process to fund public broadcasting. However, President Johnson recognized the importance of a long-term funding source when he announced at the bill's signing ceremony that "[n]ext year, after careful review, I will make further proposals for the Corporation's long-term financing" (quoted by Burke (1978: 149)).

Long-term financing never appeared, and public broadcasting apparatus survived fiscally thanks to a highly political process – public television's third structural problem. Either Congress specifically appropriated the CPB budget annually (or biannually), or

else Congresses passed specific legislation authorizing federal spending for public broadcasting. The institution of public broadcasting has seen at least eleven different pieces of legislation dealing with financing and appropriations (Rowland 1998: 44-45). In addition to its politicized funding process, the CPB is rifled through with partisanship on a personnel level, since the President appoints its governing board of 15. Again, this arrangement defied the Carnegie Commission's recommendation to isolate the board politically. In addition to Nixon's high-profile interventions into the domain of public television in 1972, the public television system is in the grips of a "political vise" in a day-to-day way (Ledbetter 1997: 9), as the annual threat of a Congressional audit has a chilling effect on the broadcast schedule (Twentieth Century 1993: 35).

These three intertwining problems – organization contradiction, fiscal uncertainty, and a politically-tainted governance – rooted as they were in public television's structure, jeopardized the system and its programming during the crises of the early 1970s. Despite these structural difficulties, public television's early programming proceeded with relatively few impediments. In fact, the bold stances adopted by many of its public affairs programs – highly critical as they were of the Vietnam War, racism, and social injustices – provoked the wrath of the Nixon administration. Instead of attacking the individual programmers, however, Nixon exploited the structural deficiencies, using the system's fiscal instability as an excuse to stock the CPB board with political allies, before further weakening the internal relations between the CPB and PBS. But before considering the historical practice of public television in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I want to examine its theoretical and ideological foundations, as codified in the Carnegie Commission's white paper.

THE CARNEGIE COMMISSION: CODIFYING PLURALISM

The Carnegie Commission's report, *Public Television: a Plan for Action*, sketched a vision for public television – or perhaps more accurately, *several* visions for public television. On an organizational level, this document presented a coherent blueprint for public television: it called for long-term funding, outlined a clearly defined organizational framework, and proposed a non-partisan administrative process. However, the Report's relative straightforwardness on structural questions contrasts with its deeply contradictory vision on questions of content and mission.

Most scholars of public broadcasting have lamented the inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in this document. Aufderheide (1991), for example, located the source of public television's "crisis of mission" in this document. For Engelman (1996), the Commission's report contributed to the "mystifying" of public broadcasting. Even the Report's author, Hyman H. Goldin, admitted that the Commission failed to articulate a clear vision of public broadcasting:

An earnest effort that failed was in bringing in younger authors, creative writers and artists into the project [of drafting the Commission's report] to assist in developing a feeling for the potential of educational broadcasting and the expression of that feeling. This was an area which the staff struggled with, in Goldin's view, in getting anyone who could expound the view with sufficient imagination and clarity... (Burke 1979: 124-125).

The Report's language was actively evasive in many places, and when not downright evasive, its rhetoric was scattered and circuitous. The Commission advanced several different rationales for public television, combining elements from various belief systems, alternating between the wonkish discourse of policy analysis in some places, and in others, abstract discussion of philosophical principles.

The Commission's report is inherently ambiguous, encompassing several goals. Instead of a single rationale or system of governing beliefs, it is more accurate to think of public television as the site of several competing rationales, one of which has dominated the other principles. The dominant rationale is and has been one of liberal pluralism, however, a second, often misunderstood, rationale of critical debate was submerged within the document. Dahl famously theorized the doctrine of pluralism (1961), which sees society as a plurality of interest groups and subcultures. Pluralists emphasize the diffuse distribution of power in Western societies, and consequently favor policies that promote competition between these groups for access to and control of public institutions (O'Sullivan 1983: 173). Pluralism also tends to place an optimistic faith in technology as an organ of social amelioration and human liberation (Pool 1983). The chief responsibility of broadcasting technologies, for pluralists, is to provide outlets for the representation of particular social groups.

The Carnegie white paper drew heavily on the discourse of liberal pluralism. It acknowledged diversity as the defining characteristic of American society. Instead of an overarching "public" the Carnegie Commission conceived of society as broken into micro-publics with particular subcultures, histories, and interests:

America is geographically diverse, ethnically diverse, widely diverse in its interests. American society has been proud to be open and pluralistic, repeatedly enriched by the tides of immigration and the flow of social thought. Our varying regions, our varying religious and national and racial groups, our varying needs and social and intellectual interests are the fabric of the American tradition. Television should serve more fully both the mass audience and the many separate audiences that constitute in their aggregate our American society.... The utilization of a great technology for great purposes, the appeal to excellence in the service of diversity – these finally became the concepts that gave shape to the work of the Commission. In the deepest sense, these are the objectives of our recommendations (Carnegie Commission 1967: 14; unless noted, solitary page citations refer to this document).

Public television's central purpose would be to represent this diversity, in order to "show us our community as it really is, [and to] provide a voice for groups in the community that otherwise may be unheard" (14). The Carnegie Corporation envisioned public broadcasting as a stage for "the unheard" (14), a "forum for debate and controversy" (92), and the "clearest expression of American diversity" (18).

The pluralistic tone derives from the Carnegie Commission's broader social and political philosophy. Ellen Lagemann's history of the Carnegie Corporation illuminates the centrality of the pluralist philosophy in the minds of the foundation's leaders. For example, the foundation's philosophy "called attention to the importance of pluralism in a democratic society and to the inextricable relationships [it] saw among pluralism, freedom, and private institutions" (Lagemann 1989: 220). This pluralism dates back to the philosophy of the foundation's namesake; Andrew Carnegie's gospel of wealth emphasized inclusivity and conflict-mediation among various social sectors (Engelman 1996: 144).¹

However, while pluralism reigns supreme, other complementary rationales are at work behind the scenes in the 1967 Report. Ouellette (1999) recently identified the ideology of "good citizenship" inherent in the Commission's recommendations. The Commission also saw public television as a tool for civic uplift, "a civilized voice in a civilized community" (1967: 18). Public television, in the minds of the Carnegie Commission, would facilitate the development of "better citizens of the world" (Engelman 1996: 144). Ouellette (1999) criticized the enlightened democracy doled out by the elites who ran public television, arguing that PBS aimed to secure the public's acquiescence to professional-managerial rationality by "channeling dissent into legitimate

behavior and official channels” (81). Similarly, other commentators have noted the elitism contained in the Carnegie Commission's report and the division it encouraged between the active creators of culture and the passive consumers of culture (Aufderheide 1991:172ff).

To an extent, however, it is hard to imagine how the Commission could have avoided the elitism contained in this ideology of good citizenship. Out of the Commission on Educational Television's 15 members, five were university presidents, five were corporate executives, and two were political elites.² Three represented the cultural and labor spheres.³ The foundation's board supplied several cabinet secretaries to the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Furthermore, given the necessary educational and financial resources required to gain access to the high levels of the “politics of knowledge” (Lagemann 1989) a certain elitism was inherent in the very concept of the foundation. Pluralism, as a set of beliefs, could best be articulated by a professional-managerial class, a class that was distanced from the immediacy of conflict between various micro-publics, that was educated to recognize society as “pluralist” and “complex,” and that could referee the competition between diverse publics (Ehrenrichs 1979). By connecting public television to its specific social roots, its historical and ideological purposes reveal themselves.

EXPLANATIONS: FOUCAULT? GRAMSCI.

In this section, I want to introduce two explanations for the purpose of public broadcasting and its rationale of pluralism. The first assumes a Foucauldian analysis of discourse and the techniques of social control. The second, in the Marxist tradition

associated with Antonio Gramsci, also considers the medium's role in social domination, but in the social context of ideological conflict. In later sections I will explore the concrete evolution of public television and PBS within the intersecting realms of politics and protest in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Gramsci's analysis, I believe, more fully comprehends the early history of public television, both in terms of its institutions and its programs.

Laurie Ouellette (1999), in her article "TV Viewing as Good Citizenship? Political Rationality, Enlightened Democracy and PBS," most recently applied the Foucauldian analysis to public television in its early days. She argues that public television played an important role in disciplining the cultural and political crises in 1960s society by capturing dissenting discourses and sanitizing them via the channels of "legitimate" journalism. For Ouellette, public television functions "as a cultural institution called upon to activate and reform the citizenry, educate and differentiate television viewers according to particular relations of knowledge and power" (1999: 64).

Ouellette bases her argument on a close reading of the public television show *The Advocates*, which began airing in 1969. This program was set up as a debate between two "opposing" sides, each composed of experts – lawyers, journalists, professors and politicians – and staged in front of a studio audience. The program's formal arrangement served to "cast democracy as a high affair properly managed by professionals" (1999: 82). By denying the public an opportunity to participate in key debates, *The Advocates* conformed to PBS purpose, which, in Ouellette's words, "was to be for the people not by the people, because its [PBS's] political rationality was rooted in their failed performance

as citizen subjects” (1999: 67). PBS thus legitimized some of the radical social critiques by confining them within the ideology of “good citizenship.”

With this argument, Ouellette is attempting to move beyond Gramsci's analysis and its focus on hegemony and counter hegemony. PBS, she believes, is “best seen as a governmental, rather than hegemonic apparatus” (65), as a technique for “rationalizing US political democracy” (66). Her use of the concept of “governmentality” traces to Foucault as McGuigan points out (1996: 13). The key Foucauldian themes at work in this concept are the management/surveillance process and the intimate connections between domination and knowledge, both within the context of Foucault's diffuse and scattered conception of power. This theory of power – often conveyed with the “capillary” metaphor – positions itself against what it sees as Marxism's mechanistic and top-down channels of power.

In my view, Ouellette's analysis is at a severe disadvantage in explaining the early development of public television. By confining her critique on public television's early *discourse* (and for the most part, the discourse of one show) and its power to structure an ideology of rational political behavior, Ouellette largely ignores the *structural* ramifications of the ideological conflict inherent in PBS's programming approach. Public television was created by federal legislation, and the state has always dominated its development. For these reasons, any explanation of the content or discourses of public television programming must do so in light of the institutions which structure public television, including the CPB and PBS.

The second explanation of public television's early history descends from the Gramsci's theory of political and ideological hegemony. Gramsci's theory takes into

account the structural mechanisms that embody competing ideologies, and at the same time, the content of these ideologies. Gramsci's key advantage is his focus on both state institutions of hegemony and their roots in particular classes (or historical blocs). The case of public television – with its close ties to the professional-managerial class and to the state – is an appropriate test for his theory.

Gramsci's analysis would predict that public television functioned in order to reconsolidate the legitimacy of a society in crisis. Deriving as it did from the vanguard of the professional-managerial class (the Carnegie Commission) in conjunction with the state, public television played a hegemonic role. Gramsci warned that a ruling historical bloc would face a "crisis of hegemony" whenever subordinate groups challenged its mandate to rule. In order to consolidate its hegemonic control, the ruling social group might strategically provide its most vocal opponents an outlet for their critique, with the clandestine purpose of "reabsorbing" that critique and thus recapturing hegemony.

Gramsci's own words anticipate the events of the 1960s:

The crisis of the ruling class's hegemony, which occurs either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example), or because huge masses (especially of peasants and petty-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands, which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution. A "crisis of authority" is spoken of: this is precisely the crisis of hegemony, or crisis of the state as a whole. (Gramsci 2000: 218).

The late-1960s saw both a war in Vietnam that failed to muster "the consent of the broad masses" and a civil rights movement that pushed a historically oppressed mass of people (African-Americans) into a state of "certain activity."

In the midst of such a crisis, so goes Gramsci's theory, the ruling authority would try to "reabsorb the control that was slipping from its grasp" (Gramsci 2000: 218). At this

moment, religious and cultural institutions and other sites of ideological leadership for the ruling power might enter into the fray. They might attempt to smooth out social conflict by creating institutions that “are principally used merely to lubricate the machinery of the status quo” (Whitaker (1974: 215). In the case of the late-1960s crisis of legitimacy, it was the elite foundations – descended from enormous wealth and staffed by the cultural and political leaders of the social order – which stepped in to pacify a malfunctioning society. Public television was their attempt at institutional “lubrication.”

At these moments of crisis, however, the process by which the ruling power re-secures its hegemony does not function automatically, or without contradiction, as if by reflex. Accordingly, Gramsci speculates “perhaps it [traditional authority] may make sacrifices, and expose itself to an uncertain future” (Gramsci 2000: 218). When a given social arrangement “exposes” itself, the critiques that had previously been submerged below the surface of ideology reveal themselves. In the context of widespread opposition to the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and the prospect of violent riots in the nation’s largest cities, the institution of public television can be seen as the embodiment of ruling class self-“exposure.” And into this vulnerable and “uncertain” organization, the forces of opposition seeped, precipitating a struggle for ideological dominance.

Indeed, just by its very existence as a structural entity outside of the commercial system, public broadcasting represented a critical alternative, a challenge to the hegemony of market-based telecommunications. The institution of public television is a concrete illustration of the observation that “experiments financed by foundations are capable of acting as a radical leaven in society” (Whitaker 1974: 327). Public television was the institutional embodiment of counter-hegemonic politics. In the first five years of

public television, it produced a host of programs that were highly critical of state, economic, and cultural forms of power.

Gramsci's analysis thus highlights the dual sense of the word "crisis": in times of social upheaval, subaltern groups have the ability to challenge the dominant ideology and to propose an alternative hegemony, just the ruling groups have the ability to preserve their hegemonic arrangement. Ouellette's sole emphasis on the darker sense of the term, on the repressive potential equally inherent within a "crisis" situation, cannot account for public television's historical defiance of the "logic of good citizenship that suited the capitalist state," as Ouellette put it (1999: 73).

Before examining this historical experience, I want to return to the Carnegie Commission's white paper, in order to coax out the theoretical precepts for critique within public television. How did the ruling social order "expose itself"? How did the rationale of critical discourse enter into the Commission's report, alongside the rhetoric of pluralism and enlightened citizenship?

CARNEGIE COMMISSION AND PUBLIC TELEVISION: ELEMENTS OF CRITICISM

Aside from the rationales of pluralism or enlightened citizenship, the Carnegie Commission advanced a third rationale for public television, one of critique. Public television was *critical* in two regards. First, owing to its creation as an alternative, noncommercial form of broadcasting, public television positioned itself *against* commercial television. Indeed, by acknowledging the need for an independent, noncommercial broadcasting service, the ideological leadership of the professional-managerial class tacitly acknowledged that the commercial media system could not

structurally serve the public interest. And by extension, the Carnegie Commission was criticizing the social relations that spawned commercial television in the first place.

Aside from this social criticism rooted within the structural organization of public television, the new medium was critical in a second, more visible sense, in the programs that it broadcast. The new medium's early programs vigorously questioned the government's war in Vietnam, national race relations, and class conflict, as I shall show below. Thus, the public television's critical power is both form and content.

The Carnegie Commission's report made hesitant steps along both critical trajectories – against the formal structures of commercial television and against its programming content. The white paper conveyed a steady current of negative reasoning. Lurking beneath its arguments was an unvoiced comparison to commercial television, as if to say “public television is this, (*not commercial television*).” Programs, of course, are the locus of immediate contact with television. So, for example, in considering “Contemporary Affairs” programming, the Carnegie Report implicitly contrasts its concept of public television to commercial television by emphasizing the programming differences between the two systems. Public television's “programs should call upon the intellectual resources of the nation to give perspective and depth to interpretation of the news, in addition to coverage of news day by day” (Carnegie 1997: 95; unless noted, the following citations refer to this document). The implication was that commercial media somehow fail to analyze public issues thoughtfully. Indeed, later the white paper more explicitly highlighted commercial television's shortcomings: “The bare reporting of incidents is not sufficient to meet the responsibilities we see for Public Television” (96).

The Carnegie Commission reserved its most critical rhetoric to attack the programming area on which the networks focused most of their resources: entertainment. However, the Commission softened these critical jabs by evasive language. In fact, the Commission resorted to reprinting the “complaints” of others against commercial entertainment, trying to remain above the fray:

Most of the complaints can be summed up in charges that television entertainment is pitched to a standard of taste which is too low, that it is produced by formula and frequently is trite and uninvolved, that it fails by its own proclaimed standard of being somewhat ahead of popular taste and in fact tends to deteriorate the standards of public taste (230).

The problem with this strategy is that there is no “complainer.” The Carnegie Commission’s report forced the “complaints” to hover and to float through public discussion, without a speaker or a body. In this passage, no person or organization was guilty of manipulating public taste or responsible for failing the public interest. The passive voice prevails: opposition to commercial broadcasting “can be summed up,” television content “is pitched.”

The Carnegie Commission framed its criticism of commercialism in subtle and qualified language. As Hoynes (1994) noted, commercial television was the Carnegie Commission’s “reference point” (141), the missing term. Under the heading “Analysis of Ideas,” the Commission embarks on a discussion of the civic functions of the new medium:

Public Television can serve Americans by providing analysis of much more than the events of current history [*as does commercial television*]. Just as there is a scarcity [*in commercial television*] of thorough analysis and interpretation of the news, there is an even greater scarcity of television analysis of forms and ideas in art and philosophy, in music and literature, in science and technology... With rare exceptions, such analysis as one finds [*on commercial television*] is limited to the narrow confines of the panel discussion, the interview, or the formal lecture...” (Carnegie 1967: 96).

In this passage, the Commission criticizes commercial television's programming *content*, without actually coming out against the networks' nightly schedules. The object of critique is "commercial television," but it had to be made present – inserted by the reader – in order for the Commission's full meaning to come across. Television, the Commission was saying, could have "served" America, with critical insight and "analysis," but its civic potential was stolen away.

The Carnegie Commission identified the source of this thievery, tracing it back to commercial television's *form*, to its funding *structure* – although, again, the Commission shrouded its findings in deflecting language. The culprit who robbed television of its civic offering was the advertisement. The Carnegie Commission "sympathized" (an emotional thing for the Commission to admit, considering its tendency for evasive language) with those who were criticizing commercial television for running "irritating and ... misleading" advertisements, which forced publicly-oriented programming to be "too limited and lacking in depth" (229-230) on the commercial networks. The Report speculated about the intentions of commercial broadcasters, concluding that "whatever the intentions, and they are good more often than critics of television customarily concede, they are carried out in an *atmosphere* which is not conducive to the soundest selection of quality programs and their best performance" (emphasis added; 232). What makes it difficult for commercial broadcasters to serve the civic interest is the "atmosphere" of commercialism.⁴

For their part, the commercial broadcasters reciprocated the friendly gesture and found the Carnegie Commission's report equally "commendable." The executives from NBC, ABC, and CBS gave persuasive testimony in favor of the Carnegie Plan during

Congressional hearings. Additionally, they donated several million dollars in grants and equipment to the newly formed CPB (Burke 1979).⁵

Thus the entire notion of public television was predicated on a contradictory relationship to commercial television. On the one hand, the new medium arose to address problems that commercial broadcasters could not answer, because of structural constraints, the pressure to maximize audiences in order to profit from advertisements, and the “atmosphere” (Carnegie 1967: 232) of commercialism. Public television was to be guided by different principles (pluralism, citizenship, criticism) and insulated structurally from the forces of the marketplace.

But whatever rhetorical compromises were necessary to formulate a broadly acceptable notion of public television – and “broadly acceptable” is what Congress found the Carnegie proposal when it passed most of that white paper’s recommendations by a three-to-one margin (Pepper 1967) – the very existence of a noncommercial public broadcasting system was a positive development for progressives and radicals. In a new medium designed pluralistically to represent “diversity,” those who were critical of the status quo had an outlet for their critiques. The early years of public broadcasting spawned a plethora of critical programs, and it is to their history that we now turn.

CRITICAL PROGRAMMING UNTIL NIXON

While it could sometimes be easy to overlook public television as the institutional embodiment of criticism, it was much harder to take for granted the critical tendencies manifested within public television’s programming. The programs from public television’s early years, 1967 to 1972, were critical of the status quo in significant ways,

scrutinizing the traditional hegemonic arrangements founded on racism, militarism, political corruption, and capitalism.

In early 1970, PBS tabulated its the weekly programming schedule by type, indicating that 28 percent of its programming fell under the “public affairs” category; this was second place behind children’s programming at 31 percent, but substantially higher than the percentages for cultural, entertainment, and how-to programming (Ledbetter 1997: 62). Not all of the public affairs programming conveyed a radical or critical or even progressive message; formally, many programs did remain bound to the techniques of elitist discourse. However, many programs made their way onto PBS that were explicitly and radically critical of the social order *and* that subverted the discourse of rational citizenship.

The vanguard public affairs program in this critical vein was the *Public Broadcasting Laboratory (PBL)*. It first aired in November 1967, the very month that the Congress signed the Public Broadcasting Act. The producers of *PBL* boldly declared its mission to be “the single most revolutionary concept in the history of American broadcast communications” (Ledbetter 1997: 47, citing *PBL* manifesto). In addition to controversial content, the program intended to pursue a controversial, avant-garde format.

The first episode featured an investigative report on the mayoral elections in three northern cities where blacks were contesting the office. The next segment was a mini-documentary produced by black poet who railed against Martin Luther King’s strategy of nonviolence, calling it the “philosophy of the fool.” The program then followed with a televised town meeting between 50 white and 50 black participants that was complete with rambunctious condemnations of state-sponsored violence. The closing segment

featured scenes from an off-Broadway play called *Days of Absence*, which was premised on the hypothetical disappearance of black people from a small southern town. The actors, all African-Americans, appeared in whiteface (Ledbetter 1997: 47-49; Engelman 1995: 152-153).

This program defied the acceptable conventions of journalism that Ouellette argues were central to the new medium of public broadcasting. Unmediated discussions, crudely edited documentary, and reverse minstrel drama – these forms defied the norms of cultural uplift, enlightenment rationality, and restrained civility that were supposedly guaranteed by this new tool of PMC governance.

Several other programs followed suit over the course of the next few years. In the early 1970s, *The Great American Dream Machine* and *The 51st State* and debuted on PBS. The former precipitated significant controversy when it exposed the activities of FBI agents provocateurs (Engelman 1995: 167). The latter dealt critically with politics in New York City; the head of New York's public station WNET called the show "purposely provocative, unpredictable, irreverent, and probing" (Witherspoon and Kovitz 2000: 60). An anti-tobacco documentary, *The Smoking Spiral* (Ledbetter 1997: 56), and *Steambath*, a satire about evil, with the sauna representing purgatory and a Puerto Rican portraying God (Starr 2000: 24), were two of the more unconventional offerings in the early 1970s. *The Banks and the Poor*, an investigative documentary about the banking system, aggressively challenged the financial system's minority lending policies. For a concluding statement, the film simply scrolled the now infamous listing of every Congressional Representative who had financial holdings in banking companies.

The *PBL* example illustrates the contradictory and idiosyncratic nature of the process of ideological co-option in the early days of public television. The Ford Foundation supported the production of *PBL*, and Ford's president, McGeorge Bundy was its co-creator. Before joining the world of philanthropy, Bundy had served as National Security Advisor in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. In light of *PBL*'s polemical criticism of the Vietnam War, Bundy's involvement seemed highly contradictory. Here was one of the architects of the Vietnam War providing an outlet for some of the war's most vocal opponents! The establishment, it appeared, had gone anti-establishment.

Indeed, as Gramsci noted (2000), the ideological process at work to recuperate the ruling bloc's hegemony do not proceed without contradiction, and as noted, the ruling power "may make sacrifices, and expose itself" in some ways (218). The McGeorge-Ford Foundation-*PBL* connection is thus a particular example of the contradictory processes of hegemony, a case in which the ruling power was literally exposing itself. It would be unwise for us to inflate the significance of this self-exposure. Certainly, the act of viewing *PBL* was not a replacement for actually taking part in an anti-war protest. But this is precisely the point: the new institution of public broadcasting did air radical criticisms of the social order on the noncommercial airspace, while the ruling bloc struggled to reassert its dominance over the ideological terrain. Gramsci's understanding of the uneven and irregular process of ideological "reabsorption" predicts PBS's unique situation during the 1967 to 1972 period.

In response to the controversy these and other programs provoked with their criticisms of the status quo, the infant institution of public television faced a political

backlash from the White House. Perhaps no event from the early days of public broadcasting as been analyzed as much as the Nixon administration's attack on public broadcasting's critical voice (Stone 1985; Engelman 1995; Ledbetter 1997; Witherspoon and Kovitz 2000). As early as its first season in 1970, the PBS leadership expressed concern that some of its programs were assuming too great a critical license; in 1971, it compiled a list of 25 "problem" programs that needed to be reconsidered before airing. This decision to self-censor in the face of on coming danger demonstrates the limits of the ruling order's "self-exposure," and gives further indicates the "uncertain future" (Gramsci 2000: 218) inherent within a time of social crisis. Self-censorship, however, could not ward off a focused structural attack, of the type Nixon was to mount against the broadcasting apparatus in 1972.

NIXON'S SHAKE-UP AND RESTRUCTURING OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Public television's problematic overlap of politics and funding set the scene for Richard Nixon's attack. In 1972, Nixon vetoed the system's Congressional funding appropriation, prompting a series of resignations on the CPB's board. Nixon then appointed or re-appointed eleven of the 15 board members, who promptly voted to discontinue funding for all public affairs programs except for *Black Journal*. Shortly afterward, the CPB's allocated funds for program development were redirected to local stations in the form of "Community Service Grants." Local stations in turn used the grants to pay for overhead and operating costs, thus draining a major source of national program funding.⁶ The restructuring forced public television producers to turn to the corporate sector in order to finance new programs. At the time of the Nixon shake-up,

business support PBS was \$11 million; by 1976, corporate dollars accounted for \$29.1 million of the national budget (Ledbetter 1997: 141). Clearly, the targets of public television's early critiques of social and political power took these criticisms seriously – seriously enough to warrant censorship and political intimidation.

Nixon's reaction marked the high point of the critical function of public broadcasting. In seeking to explain his attack on the new broadcasting system, rather than focusing on the failures of the dominant rationales of pluralism or "good citizenship," we should emphasize the success of the rationale of criticism. The quantity of pluralist diversity on PBS did not incite Nixon's attack; indeed, even if only for PR purposes, the one public affairs program he left on the air was devoted to representing minorities (*Black Journal*). Nor did Nixon attack the infant medium for being over-ambitious in the project to inculcate "good citizenship" in a deferent public, to "affirm the rationality of democratic institutions" (Ouellette 1999: 84).

If anything, the opposite is true: Nixon attacked public broadcasting because the new medium was highly and visibly critical of his administration, of the country's race relations, and the war in Vietnam. White House aide Jon Rose, revealed that Nixon's immediate aim was "to get the left-wing commentators who are cutting us up off public television at once" (Starr 2000: 29). Another administration figurehead, Clay Whitehead, composing a policy memo that asserted the need for outright control of the CPB's Board – "we need eight [a majority] loyalists to control the present CPB board and fire the current staff who make the [programming] grants" (quoted on Engelman 1996: 168). Far from merely mollifying critique and masking it under the guise of good citizenship, or passing it off as diversity for pluralism's sake, public television encouraged and gave

criticism a voice. What Nixon wanted from public television was not a promise that PBS would commit itself to the airing of diverse viewpoints, or promise to better foster the values of conformist citizenship.

Rather, Nixon sought to silence public television's critique by attacking the very structure of the public broadcasting apparatus. He changed the makeup of its governing board, and reorganized its internal PBS-CPB relations. Nixon did not force critics and dissenters to discipline themselves by entering into the discourses of socially acceptable journalism: he structurally curtailed their very ability to misbehave in the first place. The result, as Engelman noted, was that public television "became ever more wary of bold or controversial initiatives. The brief period of innovation... gave way to a high degree of cautiousness in public affairs programming" (Engelman 1995: 172).

I do not mean to romanticize the emancipatory potential of those early years or to overstate the predominance of critical programming on public television; for the most part, public television's share of the market was small, and the system was structurally unorganized. What I am arguing is that public television as an institution accommodated several functional rationales and that one of these missions, the sustained criticism of public power, played a significant role in the day-to-day operation of public television – and must play an important role in the future of the institution if public television is to serve as an agent of counter-hegemony in the future. In order to understand the ways in which critique should inform the future of public television, we need to look beyond the hesitating and incomplete formulations of the critical function as proposed by the Carnegie Commission. The answer, I propose, lies in Habermas' powerful articulation of the critical principle of the public sphere.

HABERMAS AND CRITICISM

At the outset of this journey into Habermasian territory, I want to say a few words in relation to the larger academic debate over the concept of the public sphere, which has provoked a flurry of laudatory and polemical arguments. The point of this section is not to defend Habermas point-by-point from every one of his critics. It is, however, to argue that progressive media policy should retain his central notions of criticism and scrutiny.

Garnham (1990) is on the right track when he observes that Habermas distinguishes between the principles of the public sphere – “general accessibility, especially to information, the elimination of privilege, and the search for general norms and their rational legitimation” (112) – and their particular historical or institutional manifestations. Critics, however, usually dismiss Habermas’ theory because the latter, the form of the bourgeois public sphere failed to live up to the principles. Universal access to the public sphere proved to be a sham. Women were shut out (Fraser 1991); the hypocritical class privilege was apparent in the sphere’s failure to include workers and the non-bourgeois (Nugt and Klege 1993).

Regardless of individual perspectives on the public sphere, Jurgen Habermas’ scholarship undoubtedly represents a powerful theoretical inquiry into the relations between media and society. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989/1962) outlines the historical development of a realm of debate he calls the bourgeois public sphere, arguing that the public sphere evolved as a consequence of the dialectical interplay between the private and the public. In this brief review, I concentrate

on Habermas' key *physiological* argument – that is, what the functions of the public sphere were, can and should be – rather than their momentary historical form.

The key relation for Habermas is that between the public and the private realms. The concept of “publicness” historically stood in opposition to “privateness,” in the distinction in classical Greece between the public *polis* and agora, and the private *oikos* of the home and the family. By the middle ages, publicness became bound up in the private person of the monarch, until the growth of capitalism arrived at the most clear-cut separation between the public and the private when private *men* met in public as *citizens* to debate and communicate. The institutions of the coffeehouse and the cafe sheltered this infant debate. Newspapers and periodicals, widely disseminated within bourgeois society by the mid-18th century, were the vehicles of this debate.

Habermas did more than simply define and describe this debate: he showed that the function of this debate within the public sphere is to criticize the reigning social power. He personified publicity as “a critical judge” (Habermas 1989: 2; unless noted, solitary page citations refer to this book), and critics as those who “think their own thoughts, directed against the authorities” (25). Within the institutions of the public sphere, citizens “readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion” (25-26). This antagonistic sense of public opinion “challenged the established authority of the monarch: ...its character was from the beginning both private and polemical at once” (52). Thus by constantly requiring the monarch to justify his decisions, to provide *reasons* for behavior that he used to justify by appealing to his divine *will* alone, the critical public had explicitly political functions for the bourgeois

class. In a very literal sense, *criticism* and *public* converged: one was inconceivable without the other.

Of course, the title of the book concerns the “transformation” of this realm of critical debate. For Habermas, the public sphere went into decline when it compromised its ability to be critical. In other words, the public sphere abandoned its principle at the very moment that its form became progressively more inclusive, with the expansion of suffrage and the lowering of admissions requirements to the public sphere. Capturing this contradiction, Habermas explained that the “tendencies pointing to the collapse of the public sphere are unmistakable, for while its scope is expanding impressively, its function has become progressively insignificant” (4). This paradox is not inherent within the theory of the public sphere, or the result of contradictions within its principles; rather, the paradox rests within the historical development of the public sphere: the “collapse” was in the practical embodiment of the concept, not with the concept itself. As such, I see nothing in Habermas to dissuade us from striving to realize the *principles* of the public sphere in the future *form* of the public sphere.

Habermas locates this paradox in the bourgeoisie’s eventual wresting of power from feudalism. The principle of bourgeois critique, so potent when applied to monarchical power, did not have the same effect when the bourgeoisie gained state power. The problem was that the particular forms and institutions that harbored bourgeois criticism, in effect became forms of bourgeois of power. Newspapers and journals, for example, instead of serving primarily as vehicles for argument and critical debate, developed into “a capitalist undertaking” (185) complete with advertising departments, industrialized printing presses and increasingly centralized governance:

To the extent that [the institutions that were engaged in critical debate] were commercialized and underwent economic, technological, and organizational concentration, however, they have turned during the last hundred years into complexes of societal power, so that precisely their remaining in private hands...threatened the critical functions of publicist institutions (188). The discrete realms of the public and the private began to intermingle and interpenetrate. The public state found itself intervening in the affairs of the heretofore-private economy, and debate concerning public affairs increasingly became bound to the private realm of commercial newspapers and the home. The public sphere “lost its political *function*, namely: that of subjecting the affairs that it had made public to the control of a critical public... The *principle* of the public sphere, that is, critical publicity, seemed to lose its strength in the measure that it expanded as a sphere and even undermined the private realm” (140; original italics). Habermas explicitly sets up the division of principle/institution, function/form, and his historical argument concerns the development of the institutions and the forms of the public sphere.

If the institution of public television is to be more successful than the critical days of its infancy, democratic reformers need to concentrate on its structural dimension. Public television's mere presence represents an opportunity for critical programming, but only if we reconstitute the structures of public television.

NOTES TOWARDS A MODEL OF CRITICAL PUBLIC TELEVISION

In the concluding section, I want to sketch roughly a few ideas and strategic considerations for the movement to reform public television's critical function. It is important to clarify that I conceive of policy reform on two complimentary levels. First, there is the legislative and federal level of *policy* reform: federal agencies and Congress. Admittedly, progressive policy change in this dimension does not seem likely in the near

future. The second site for reform is on the *local* and community level, as citizens organize to change the day-to-day operating policies of their local stations. Progressive reform on this level is much more promising, and indeed, several communities across the US have initiated campaigns to reform their public television stations. Both components of reform – policy and grass-roots – must be aware of and in communication with each other. Accordingly, the following remarks aim to frame local reform movements within a general policy context, and to place grass-roots participation at the core of any policy initiative.

From a legislative perspective, the current administration's stance on communication policy rules out most efforts to push ahead with structural policy reform. Vociferous elements within the Republican Party have resurrected the Gingrich-era calls to "zero out" federal funding for the public broadcasting system, and talk of "privatizing" public broadcasting has surfaced again. Indeed, the current administration's general communication policy is downright hostile to public-interest regulation. In this climate, attempting to promote the critical principle of the public sphere within public television is a distant goal, subsumed to the effort of securing public television's very survival.

These practical considerations aside, committed reformers must be ready to suggest a new vision for public television when circumstances change. To be successful, any proposal will have to address the chronic problems that plague within public television's apparatus: organization contradiction, fiscal uncertainty, and a politically-tainted governance. Public television has never achieved structural independence from government or commercial interference; as a result, it has failed to perform the critical function of the public sphere, aside from a brief period before 1972.

Several coherent, sophisticated policy proposals have been advanced for structurally reforming the public television system. In 2000, Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting, a media reform advocacy group, released its proposal for a public broadcasting trust (CIPB 2000a). The CIPB proposal parallels the proposals for a public trust put forward by the Carnegie Corporation's second and less well-known attempt to influence public television's development in 1978 (*A Public Trust: The Report of the Carnegie Commission on the Future of Public Broadcasting*), and more recently by Twentieth Century Task Force on Public Television, in 1993.

Trust-fund proposals aim to address public television's three structural problems. Most importantly, they attempt to secure a long-term source of funding for public television, for example, an initial "investment" that would yield an annual interest dividend large enough to support public television, or a tax on the auctioning of future electro-magnetic spectrum space, as digital tele-communications expand. Secondly, these proposals attempt to isolate the public broadcasting system from political interference by reconstituting the CPB as a non-federal agency; certainly, an independent funding source would by itself eliminate much of the constant political interference. Thirdly, these proposals aim to clarify the internal "bureaucracies" that constitute public television. By reconstituting public broadcasting through policy as a Trust, the critical function would thrive, unencumbered by the compromising intrusions of politics and funders.

TOWARDS A POPULAR FRONT

In addition to depoliticizing and decommercializing public television, viable policy reform must seek to democratize the public television apparatus. This project is

rooted on the grass-roots level, and seeks to democratize the structure of public television station-by-station. The most promising aspect of this strategy is that it can gain momentum regardless of the partisan climate in Washington.

The other great strength of this approach is that it also connects the struggle for public television reform with broader progressive and radical movements. The cross-linkages are mutually beneficial, indeed, symbiotic. On the one hand, progressive movements can use public television as a means for disseminating ideas and mobilizing action. On the other hand, public television reform is an end in itself, an end that is best furthered through in coalition with other causes. The recent experience of the Save Pittsburgh Public Television group – a coalition of labor unions, environmentalist groups, and peace and justice advocates – stands out in this regard (Starr 2000).

These grass-roots reform movements are underway in cities across the country, and have been for twenty years (Starr 2000). The first step is usually to put pressure on the station's community advisory board to hold open planning meetings or to allow members of the public a greater voice in the daily-operations of the station. As is the nature of grass-roots activism, change is usually piece-meal, evolving from one success to another. Eventually, a well-organized campaign can pressure on the local station to air programs and films that had previously been too risqué for public television. In the end, a grass-roots campaign can succeed in instituting new by-laws for its local station, compelling the station's board to stand for elections, or even assume public control of the day-to-day operations of the station. Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting's recently published manual, coaches local activists and suggests tactics on "how to make

public broadcasting accountable to your community” (CIPB 2000b). By controlling local public television stations, citizens will be able to “speak truth to power”

CONCLUSION: HABERMAS, GRAMSCI, AND THE FUTURE

Because Habermas' historical analysis confined itself to the development of the public sphere in Western Europe, it cannot fully explain the American experience, as Schudson noted (1982). In order to more fully explain the historical development of public television, we need to pursue a Gramscian perspective, in order to account for the professional-managerial class role in re-establishing cultural and political hegemony. American public television's class origins and functional purpose differed from the European experience of the bourgeois public sphere. Instead of an emergent capitalist class using public broadcasting as a political instrument against the feudal class, as was the case in Western Europe, public television in the United States was established by the hegemonic professional-managerial class to manage dissenting opinions. The former was a tool against social domination, the latter a tool to aid social domination.

Moreover, public broadcasting emerged in the historical context in which the simple dichotomy between public and private that had grounded Habermas' explanation had been complicated. Indeed, the contemporary media institutions, though privately owned and operated, have amassed exceptional social wealth and influence. If the mere presence of an industrialized newspaper that ran advertisements compromised the public sphere's critical integrity, then how utterly destructive of the principle of criticism is a globalized media conglomerate that has become one of the principle repositories of social, economic, and cultural power?

Scholars and activists should continue to debate Habermas' historical analysis, but we must not lose sight of the ideals of the public sphere and their great importance to the *future* of public broadcasting policy. Equally important is that we remember the experience of public television's critical programming during the 1967 to 1972 period. Because the only understanding that early programmers had of the concept of critique was the muddled and evasive definition put forward in the Carnegie Commission's report, early programmers lacked a theoretical grounding; the legion of critical programs – *Public Broadcasting Laboratory*, *The Banks and the Poor*, etc – thus scattered at the first signs of institutional hostility. Furthermore, the rationales of liberal pluralism and good citizenship that were also present in the Carnegie Commission's white paper diluted the critique and perhaps turned elements of the critical programs into tools of political rationalization. The principle of the public criticism of power which Habermas identified and theorized must orient the agenda of future policy agitation.

The logic of neo-liberalism now dominates the debate in many policy fields, including the field of communications policy. Indeed, the trend towards privatization and the expansion of market-based principles threatens to undo a century's-worth of democratic and liberal advances. Perhaps at no greater moment has civil society required a critical voice to hold off this assault upon democracy and to further the cause of social emancipation. Recently, scholars have echoed Habermas' reflections on the nature of criticism. "Criticism," Gitlin notes, "checks power and outdistances it; it instigates and goads and also creates; it acts impertinent to itself as well as to power..." (Gitlin 1991: 336). Criticism can be the principle to motivate "citizen concern, scrutiny, and intervention" (Dahlgreen 1991: 9) into the structures of state and economic power. Much

like the bourgeois public sphere's function of critique in the 17th and 18th centuries, the democratized public sphere of the 21st century would "speak truth to power" (McChesney 1999: 116), and even to itself, constantly rejustifying, renewing, and reasserting democratic society.

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¹ Perhaps the best testimony of the pluralist rationale's staying power is public television's current approach to what it considers to be its primary audience, the professional-managerial class. PBS currently aims most of its prominent programs – high culture (e.g. *ExxonMobil Masterpiece Theatre*) and a plethora of news shows (including *The Nightly Business Report*, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, and *Washington Week in Review*) – to the affluent PMC. The commentators who appear on these and its other public affairs shows overwhelmingly come from the PMC, as Hoynes (1999) demonstrated in his comprehensive survey of representation on PBS. Just as the public radio system has become comfortable with its role as the “cultural medium of the professional-managerial class” (Ohmann 1997), so too has public television become content to trumpet its audience as “a demographic with buying power” and “a highly educated audience,” at least to potential sponsors. Conservative critics such as Ferguson (1994) never tire of condemning PBS as:

a government-funded plaything for the nation's well-to-do...college presidents, lapsed priests, animal-rights activists, grad students, and guilty MBAs who compose the affluent, socially conscious audience PBS prizes so highly.

Corresponding to PBS's rhetorical focus on the PMC has been a shift in the way PBS articulates its purpose and function. The Negt and Kluge (1993) are on the right track with the observation that public television “acts like a business” (109). Public television's programming and scheduling decisions are based on audience share calculations, niche market considerations, and the other decision tools of commercial broadcasters. Indeed, PBS's 2000 conference trumpeted its prestigious “brand” –according to marketing surveys and focus groups (Lash 2000).

² The university presidents were James Conant (Harvard), Lee DuBridge (California Institute of Technology), David Henry (Illinois), James Killian (chair; MIT), and Franklin Patterson (Hampshire College). The corporate executives were Oveta Hobby (Houston Post), J.C. Kellam (Texas Broadcasting Company), Edwin Land (Polaroid), Joseph McConnell (Reynolds Metal), and Robert Saudek (Robert Saudek, Inc.). The politicians were John Hayes (Ambassador to Switzerland) and Terry Sanford (former governor of North Carolina); the Texas communications executives also had close political ties with President Johnson (Burke 1979).

³ Two artists sat on the Commission (writer Ralph Ellison and pianist Rudolf Serkin), along with one labor leader (Leonard Woodcock, vice president of the United Auto Workers).

⁴ The Carnegie Commission's qualified endorsement of the commercialist organization of broadcasting in the US is consistent with the foundation's historic behavior within the media reform movement. Indeed, as several scholars have noted, the Carnegie Corporation played a prominent role in the National Advisory Committee on Education by Radio in the 1930s (McChesney 1999; Engelman 1996). This reformist group advocated that educators work within the existing commercial networks (NBC and CBS). It thus broke ranks with the more radical National Committee on Education by Radio, which “regarded the profit motive as inimical to democratic communication as it would be to public education” (McChesney 1996:190). Instead of agitating for the creation of a noncommercial radio network or at the very least, the reservation of broadcast spectrum for noncommercial use, the Carnegie Corporation-led reformers were content with the Communications Act of 1934, a bill that confirmed the dominance of a commercial rationale for media policy in the US. After these crucial days in the 1930s, “Never again would a fundamental restructuring of American broadcasting be seriously considered by a government body” (Engelman 1996: 35).

⁵ For commercial broadcasters, support for public broadcasting conveniently merges altruism and self-interest. As Noam notes in his defense of public-interest programming on commercial television, commercial broadcasters liked the idea of a non-commercial network because “it did not contest advertising dollars, its audiences were small, and it relieved the pressures for quality content on commercial television” (1998: 148).

⁶ To this day, Community Service Grants cover three-fourths of the operating expenses of local stations.