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FOREWORD

The television sets in almost every home, the radios in almost every car, and the long hours spent by the typical American in watching and listening to them vividly attest the fact that telecasting and broadcasting are very important forces in our society. But down what roads do they push us? Are they forces for good or evil? And are they being fully and properly utilized?

Such questions as these receive conflicting, and often quite heated, answers. Indeed, one of the few things that has been conclusively determined by the numerous congressional investigations of the communications industry is that expert and experienced observers will offer diametrically opposed appraisals of the impact of radio and television. Thus, some pronounce television a great boon to education, since it affords a basis for widespread dissemination of lectures delivered by our most learned men. Others conclude that it has impaired education by glorifying delinquency and distracting students from serious work. Some assert that television has revitalized home life by providing a new means of entertainment at home; others, that it has injured what little cohesiveness still exists in the typical American home. To some, televised and broadcast political speeches and conventions have seemed the keystone for greater political sophistication and knowledge among voters; but to others, television is only the newest, and most dangerous, weapon in the arsenal of the political hucksters and bamboozlers.

Undoubtedly the virtues and vices of television and radio are intimately connected with the structure of the industry and the manner in which it is regulated. Many exponents of change insist that the networks should be restricted (if not broken up entirely), that television channels should be differently allocated henceforth, or even reallocated retroactively, and that the Federal Communications Commission should regulate the entire industry more strictly. A few persons consider that the need to limit access to the air waves—and the ensuing monopoly in a television or radio channel—would justify even a public-utility-type governmental regulation of the broadcasting and telecasting industry.

In this issue of the symposium a "balanced presentation" is sought as to the desirability of change in the present structure, organization, and practices of the television and radio industry. And so Congress, the Department of Justice, the

FCC's Network Study Group, and the networks themselves all are given their say here. Since current technology still does not permit everyone who so desires to transmit messages through the ether, who is to be selected to hold this privilege? And why? What defects disqualify one for an FCC license? Further, although it is often forgotten, commercial radio and television stations are not the only aspirants for FCC licenses. Are these others given a fair share of the radio spectrum? Or, instead, have mobile radio communications been stunted by FCC policies?

The importance of the Federal Communications Commission and of the privileges it bestows has recently lured the attention of at least one congressional committee. While this symposium cannot match Washington in providing a novel cross-examination of FCC members or a later spectacular firing of the chief interrogator, there are presented here some interesting observations about the procedure of the Commission and some suggestions for better formulation and promulgation of its policies. Especially timely, perhaps, is the appraisal of the results from 1952 legislation designed to guarantee FCC fairness.

In a field so fast-moving, it would be ridiculous to suggest that this, or any other symposium, could be exhaustive. For example, when this symposium was originally planned, many well-informed persons commented that "pay-television" was a dead issue. Recently, however, this issue has been revitalized; and at the moment there are some congressional intimations that very soon it may be dead again. Despite such fluidity, this symposium will, it is hoped, provide many insights of lasting value, and afford a basis for determining whether fundamental legislative and administrative changes as to television and radio would be desirable.

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