TV and YOUR CHILD

Very Rev. Msgr. Edwin B. Broderick, Ph.D.

Your Child at TV

"No one has the right to watch passively the rapid developments in television."

—Pope Pius XII, January 1, 1954.

"Parents in particular should be urged to see to it that out of the richness of television fare, the best programs are brought to the attention of their children."

—The Television Code, NARTB.

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By Very Rev. Msgr. Edwin B. Broderick, Ph.D.

Famed artist, Roy Doty, narrates and illustrates "The Adventures of Danny Dee," seen Monday through Friday at 5:15 P. M. over WABD and the Du Mont Television Network.

THE AUTHOR

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THE AGE OF TELEVISION

"Speak roughly to your little boy
And beat him when he sneezes;
He only does it to annoy,
Because he knows it teases."

— ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND.

SUCH was the ugly old Duchess's counsel to parents. We have no intention, however, of passing this along as good advice. As a matter of record, it had only the worst effect: Anyone who has read Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* will remember that the Duchess's little boy turned into a pig! Indeed, this horrible example of parental care highlights one fact only—how not to be a parent.

What parent in America would not weep anxious tears on finding Junior and Sis turning into little pigs as they sit longer and longer each day viewing just about everything offered on television? The fantasy of Wonderland thus provides an adequate analogy for a serious concern of parents.

Too much television, like too much candy or too many aspirins, is not good for children. Flicking the dial to any show at all, like leaping from the high diving board before checking to see whether there's water in the pool, can have its bad effects. The vivid attraction of TV, like the rhythmic coiling of a snake, can be so fascinating that the question, "Is it poisonous?" may not arise until the children are helpless in its grasp.

The Problems: Children and TV

There would not be the slightest pretext for the Niagara of sense and nonsense, facts and figures, lies and statistics

poured forth on the subject of television within the past five years were it not for the truth that *children are:*

—the most ardent followers of TV.
—the most impressed by TV.
—the least provided for by TV.
—the least equipped to cope with TV.

There is hardly a survey of television and its effects on children which has not concluded that this problem towers above all others.

Pope Pius XII regards television as a "marvelous instrument," capable of producing "a profound influence for good or evil on public and private life. It is a privileged instrument of human exploration, an effective means of putting men in contact with one another and of revealing to them most quickly, surely and with an unsuspected power of penetration the innumerable forms of contemporary life." The Holy Father, with typical paternal concern, considers as a basic problem the relations between TV and children.

"Watch out, dear children," he told an audience of elementary school children at St. Peter's Basilica, on May 2, 1954. "While you walk in the streets or play the games of childhood; when you take up certain newspapers and books; when you happen to attend shows that progress has brought even within the walls of your own homes: watch out! Often the serpent may be hidden there to strike you, to snatch you from Jesus. Never stop watching out for him; he may bewitch you, and then you would be lost." At the first sign of danger, the Pontiff continues, "run to your mother right away." But what shall it avail the child if you, the mother or the father, cannot see the serpent "hidden there"? The Holy Father replies, "He may bewitch you, and then you would be lost."

The Pontiff points out that the everyday things often serve as a mask for Satan. Television, being the newest and shiniest of them, might become the slickest and the cleverest of the devil's disguises.

LASSIE

Jeff Miller, portrayed by Tommy Rettig, and his faithful canine pal, Lassie, probably the most famous canine heroine in contemporary tales, stars of CBS Television's new adventure series, "Lassie," Sundays, 7:00-7:30 P. M., EST.

To penetrate that disguise, we must recognize it. To recognize that disguise, we must know television as it is—good and bad, its vice and its virtue, its proper use and abuse.

Again quoting Lewis Carroll, we propose an adequate analogy.

"How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spreads his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in,
With gently smiling jaws!"

This pet that amuses the children could be a friendly little crocodile, or, if we don't watch out, a fiendly little crocodile that could become too dangerous for their safety. So, too, could it be with television.

We may take lightly all there is to say about healthy, happy children at play in the sunshine and fresh air; take it lightly when we see them engrossed in a game or running about like ten little Indians. But when their play takes on all the vigor of youth bent on exerting its energy in violent action, we pause to ask: What has become of "care-free youth?" Why the macabre influence in their play? If and when youngsters unseat themselves from in front of the television set to indulge in playing, they often imitate and re-enact what they view on television.

Teenage TV

To the prophets of doom and gloom, television is not just big and bad: it is the biggest and the worst. But its rose-colored seers hail it as the greatest instrument ever invented by the genius of man.

Not so long ago you heard solemn predictions of a pictorial world of the future. "We are leaving the age of the printed and spoken word and entering the age of the picture." This instrument that could solve the baby sitting problem in one fell swoop seemed almost divine! "Let's stay at home and watch television" became the new indoor

sport. "Did you see 'Where's My Bill' last night?" became a standby question to spark a dragging conversation or to allow you to give your own version of the show.

In five years television has outgrown its infancy. Then, it was commonplace for the televiewer to watch Hopalong Cassidy with the sound turned off while listening to the Dodgers on the radio. New programs and techniques have now been added to the old TV equation of murder-plus-vaudeville-plus wrestling-equals-television. Television, if not fully grown, has at least donned the dungarees of the teenager.

Television in the United States today almost defies measurement. Now there are almost 450 of the allocated 2,053 TV stations in active operation. Each new station is allocated and licensed by the government agency which supervises the airwaves—the Federal Communications Commission, the FCC.

Recent statistics put the number of TV sets at over 33 million. In Chicago, for example, there are more TV sets than bathtubs; and in Boston, fewer telephones than TV receivers. Yet five years ago, according to a survey of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, there were only 876,542 sets and 106 television stations.

The Catholic Looks At TV

Our Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, has this to say about television. "Let us fully acknowledge the worth of this splendid conquest of science, for it is another manifestation of the admirable greatness of God, 'Which He reveals to man in order to be honored in His wonderful works (Eccl. xxxviii. 6). So television, too, obliges us all to gratitude, a duty which the Church never wearies of inculcating in her children every day in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, telling them that 'it is really worthy and just, right and salutary, always and everywhere to give thanks to God' for His gifts."

In philosophical terms, television is classified as an indifferent object, neither good nor bad in itself. Yet the individual who uses TV cannot remain indifferent about it. Its goodness or badness, like any other creature, depends upon the use or abuse to which man puts it. Like the forces of fire and water which can be life-giving or death-dealing, TV can be an object of joy or of tragedy for the spirit of man. As Our Holy Father points out, "If, indeed, television, when well regulated, can be an effective means of a sound, Christian education, it is also true that it is not free from dangers, because of the abuses and evils to which it can be perverted by human weakness and malice. These dangers are all the more grave as the power of suggestion of this invention is greater, and its audience wider and more indiscriminate." The responsibility to use properly this gift of God, therefore, rests in the hands of each one of us. Proper use of this instrument presupposes an understanding of it.

TV Targets

R. L. Sharon, in his *Television and Our Children,* observes: "Like all Gaul, TV in the United States is divided into three chief parts—the sponsor, the advertising agent, and the station owner." The sponsor buys the station's time and facilities, and the advertising agent arranges the transaction. To him, the rest of the TV cast—the actors, writers, engineers, producers, puppets—any person or thing you care to mention, are all subsidiary.

Everything depends upon this arrangement of the sponsor buying station time through the offices of the advertising agent. The station and advertising agent profit directly from the sponsor. The one from the sale of time and facilities, the other from the commission the sponsor pays for his services. The sponsor's profit is expected to come from the good-will and subsequent increase in sales which he hopes to gain from the public.

Ultimately, therefore, the most direct of all relations in

The Big Top

Ringmaster Jack Sterling, presiding over "the biggest show on television," introduces the sensational circus acts on CBS-TV's "The Big Top."

Saturdays, 12:00 Noon to 1:00 P. M., EST.

TV is between the sponsor and the public. The sponsor hopes to please the public, and by so doing to increase his sales.

You and I, then—as if we hadn't known—are the targets of TV. You and I could control TV by making known our collective desires to the sponsor. His income is in our pocketbook.

When we are wise enough and experienced enough to know what we want and how to get it, the problem is solved. Unfortunately, however, we have not yet solved this problem. And, graver yet is the fact that not only you and I are the targets of the sales-minded sponsor. There is another and more important target: *the children.*

HOW BAD IS TV?

> And the Piper advanced and the children followed:
> And when all were in, to the very last,
> The door in the mountainside shut fast.
>
> —"THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN."

IF the Pied Piper, who spirited the children of Hamelin away so charmingly and alarmingly, were to step from the pages of Robert Browning's poem into modern reality, he probably would commission a statistician to take a survey on the effects of his "long pipe of smooth, straight cane."

To date there has been an astonishing wealth of TV surveys which do not, in Belloc's words, "present a pistol at the head of our better judgment." Several of these surveys appear unbiased. Such surveys as well as our own observations pinpoint the problems which exist in every American home housing children and television.

Time For TV

A survey of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters reports that children of all ages watch TV from a minimum of fourteen and a half hours weekly to a maximum of twenty-three hours weekly. Other surveys of TV time have been surprisingly uniform in their findings. We set twenty hours weekly, therefore, as a fair estimate of the time an average child spends watching television.

Now twenty hours a week—practically a day—at anything, be it televiewing or writing poetry, is a considerable period of time. It is equal to fifty per cent of the established working week, or almost as much time as a child spends in a classroom during a school week.

Our Holy Father noted that "television finds its most

avid and rapt devotees among children and adolescents who, because of their very youth, are more apt to feel its fascination and, consciously or unconsciously, to translate into real life the phantasms they have absorbed from the lifelike pictures of the screen."

Many children spend too much time watching TV. Parents, who were so careful to control their children in attendance at the movies, now let them look at television a whole day out of the week. These parents may argue that television is a built-in baby sitter. Certainly it is the easiest way for busy parents. It keeps the children quiet and may be a Godsend on a rainy Saturday. But TV viewing for twenty hours a week, we emphasize, is excessive, and is neither healthy nor sane.

TV Battles the Three Rs

Lewis Carroll's Alice, sitting before the television set, might explain it this way:

> "Oh, you foolish Alice!" she answered herself. "How can you learn lessons in here? Why, there's hardly any room for you, and no room at all for any lesson books!"

When over-emphasis is present, "something's got to give." Children, therefore, watch TV with a corresponding decline in other activities; such as reading, studying, washing dishes, or outside play. This TV hangover is distinguished by a kind of torpor, an unwillingness to do anything but hold one's head in both hands. Many teachers have despaired of teaching children who have watched TV far into the night and attend classes the next day.

In May, 1950, when Hoppy was in his heyday, a teacher in Bergenfield, New Jersey, threw in the towel against TV hangover. She notified the Board that she was resigning; going to Reno, Nevada; there to get away from TV. Children surfeited with TV, she complained, were bored by classroom fare. And, inasmuch as she could neither sing

Sing a Song

Charity Baily in "Sing a Song" at 10:00 A. M., Sunday morning over WNBT.

nor shoot from the hip, she was going some place where the three Rs were as yet in good standing.

Another teacher gave up trying to put on a three-ring circus in order to attract the attention of children accustomed to watching "horses galloping across the screen for several hours a day."

We might well observe another obstacle for children TV viewers: TV's spelling of some words. Have you ever noticed the difference between the spelling of TV ads and the spelling in the classroom?

Watch TV!

Not only the three Rs suffer from excessive televiewing. There is a loss of social contacts, of social interplay, with a corresponding loss of balance. Those of gloomier mind, who paint an unrelieved future of harsh blacks and whites (disregarding the advancement of TV in color), talk of a "race of spectators" and a "generation of televidiots" in the making.

Florence N. Brumbaugh, director of Hunter College Elementary School of New York, asked a child why he liked TV. He replied, "It gives you stories like a book, pictures like movies, voices like radio, and adventures like comics."

Children are amazingly devoted to television. They are acutely aware of what's going on: They need consult no TV log to find Who, When, and What channel. But, it is children, the devotees of TV, who are offered the least number of suitable programs.

Gun Totin' TV

Who, upon entering home, has not beheld a "good guy" of some thirty pounds, swathed in the panoply of the West, with his excited wide blue eyes confronting you from behind a pair of Peacemakers? "Get 'em up!" You comply. "Don't make a move, or I'll plug you." You move. Bang! You pretend the agonies of dying, your performance depending upon your age and weight. The Terror of Maple Street thus claims another "bad guy."

Lou Costello's comic query, "Who's on first?" has only one answer in television: It's Hoppy! Hoppy, that is, or Roy Rogers, Gene Autry, Wild Bill—whoever wears the Levi's, ten-gallon hat, and six-gun to the wild delight of the little ones. Westerns are television's chief attraction for children—at one time 79% of the children's programs in one area, according to a TV survey.

Westerns in themselves are not evil. They are an outdoor version of cops and robbers; the characters are clearly defined as "good guys" and "bad guys," and good always triumphs over evil (after twenty-eight and a half minutes). City children even learn what prairies, mountains, and horses look like. Every age has its own brand of heroes, and the "good guys" of the silent movies are now loudly retreading into our livingrooms. Parents may sometimes forget that in their youth they enjoyed Westerns without any noticeable ill effects. The difference lies in the almost unrelieved degree of sadism in some of the TV Westerns.

The National Council of Protestant Churches through its Broadcasting and Film Commission, operating under the supervision of Yale Divinity School, conducted a TV survey in Connecticut. After interviewing 3,500 New Haven homes it reports that there is an average of fifteen episodes of violence per hour in Westerns, the most common TV fare for children. On this basis, you can be certain that every four minutes, perhaps more often if one deducts time for commercials, an episode of violence or sadism confronts your child. TV thus becomes an electronic chamber of horrors. On the last Saturday in August 1954 there were seventeen Westerns offered on the TV menu in metropolitan New York.

Fortunately, many of the old Western movies, accommodated to TV, have now run their course, and new Westerns, made expressly for TV, are in conformity with the recommendations of reputable TV advisors.

A small child advised a puzzled TV repairman to clean out the dead cowboys from the bottom of the set if he wanted it to work again.

Televiolence

In *Seduction of the Innocent,* Dr. Frederick Wertham, a noted American psychiatrist greatly concerned with the mental health of our children, describes one of his experiments:

"I found especially revealing what children draw when asked to draw anything they have seen on television. Typical of many others is the drawing made by a sweet little girl of six. The color scheme was massive red, a lot of black and little blue. She said: 'I drew the picture of a man in his hotel room, and someone came in from the window and he had a stick in his hand and he's going to hit the man over the head.' And this is exactly what she had drawn, with even the room number over the hotel-room door."

Brutality and sadism, most notable in old Westerns, appear to be among the evils television holds for children. Violence undertaken in the cause for good is not defensible. Even less defensible is the detailed description of home-made weapons and instruments of torture. Unfortunately, this is the fare that television sometimes offers our children.

I recall a sequence of three shows, chosen at random one evening in the earlier days of television. In one, children are playing with a vial of deadly cobra venom stolen from a hospital; in another, elaborate plans were detailed for the robbery of a bank; in the third, a child was held as a hostage to extract valuable plans from his father. If these episodes could fill an adult with horror, how much greater their effect upon an imaginative, impressionable child! How they would occupy his hours of darkness, I will not venture to say.

Violence, the modernist argue, is a part of living. When you seek to shield your child from it they claim you are rearing him in an incubator. So, too, we could argue, are

"Kukla, Fran and Ollie"

Kukla, Burr Tillstrom, Fran Allison and Ollie presented over the NBC network Monday through Friday at 7:00 P. M.

Gene Lockhart

"The Hon. Homer Bill" presented over the NBC netwowrk.

sight-seeing trips through the city's morgue and the sewerage system a part of life. But who looks forward to these as a steady diet? Actually, no normal person can remain unmoved to a knifing, a beating, or a poisoning every four minutes. TV episodes, action-laden, thrill-packed, sense-bombarding, sensational, and sometimes sexational, greatly affect the child viewer.

Fooled by TV

When we hear children parroting advertising slogans or singing commercials, then we begin to realize more clearly the hypnotic spell that TV casts over children. Child psychologists point out as the most common of adverse effects of TV commercials, the loss of individuality and the evils of exploitation. Children, they admit, may chant these commercials to spoof them as well as to salute them. But whether in ridicule or in reverence they repeat these slogans almost to a point of stultification.

Of far more consequence is the evil of exploitation, and the graver evils of a sense of guilt and disillusionment. Commercials do not beseech. They command. "Tell your mommy to buy Krikkle-Kraks!" "Insist on Glemo." "Braggo's Bread is best for you!" A commercial for a certain brand of bread guaranteed children that they would begin to grow after eating it for seven days.

The NARTB Television Information Committee pointed out that children's TV heroes established strong brand preferences among 70% of all young viewers and that 89% of these viewers' parents buy the products they request.

If you, while shopping with Junior, reject Braggo's Bread or Krikkle-Kraks, the chances are fair that Junior may be affected by your action. He may feel discriminated against because you have not bought Braggo's, the bread that sponsors the puppet show, and this to the point where he may be too embarrassed to view that program or to enjoy it anymore.

Disillusionment follows, for example, when the child finds that after seven days of eating a certain food, he has grown not a jot. Children are too innocent to be exploited; they are too young to be made cynical by unreasonable claims.

Stereotype, a sense of guilt, and disillusionment often result from television advertising. These evils are not peculiar to television advertising, however. They do appear elsewhere, in most forms of mass communications. But what medium is more effective than the combined sight and sound magic of television? Will it become the modern electronic Pied Piper?

TV for Children?

What child can successfully weather this monotonous TV menu of murder, torture, sadism, fear, horror and tension, hold-ups, robbers, excessive violence and immodesty in dress, the exploitation of children in advertising and in the selling of merchandise, the bad grammar, the glamorization of dead-end kids, and the weird space fiction?

Occasionally that which purports to be children's TV entertainment is unsuitable even for adult consumption. And, by some law of random chance, due to the limitations of time and TV stations, programs suitable only for adults are pushed back into time slots usually given to children's programs. Consequently children are often exposed to an adult world for which they are not conditioned mentally, emotionally and morally.

Although parents are asking why there is such a lack of variety in children's programs, producers seem reluctant to explore the "new" fields of classic literature, Bible stories, and science. Some producers seem more interested in the subsidiary rights of the show than in the show itself. It appears to make little difference to them that the program is unsuitable as long as children buy their special uniforms, knives, and pistols. Their main purpose is to provide as cheaply and as easily as possible something to fill the time

between commercials. If these producers would spend as much money and talent on the production of wholesome programs as on the shows they consider "not to be harmful," parents would have little cause for concern. Producers must be aware at this late date that parents are as critical of what is omitted from children's programs as they are of what is presented.

In an understandable endeavor to provide thrills, chills, and excitement, enough thought may not be given to the harmful effects of scenes of violence on younger children's minds. It poses a challenge that must be faced. Children are with us forever. There will always be a place in the world for those who would entertain them well.

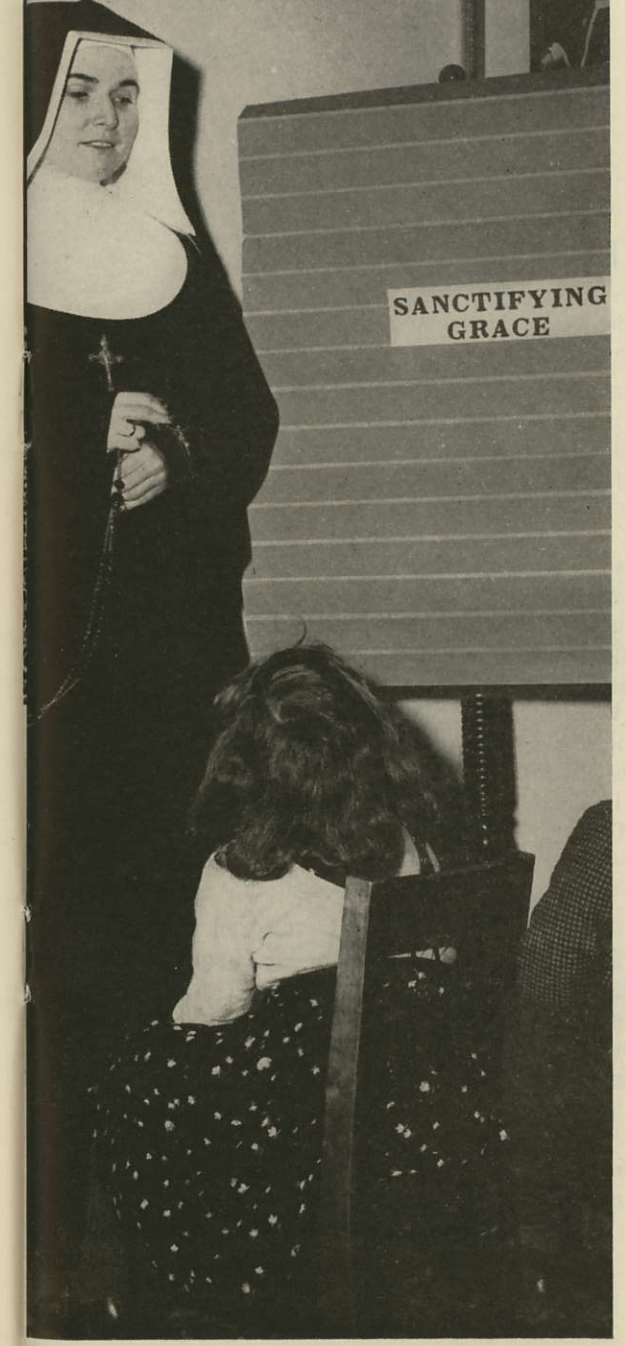
Remember the children in Browning's poem:

> "For he led us, he said, to a wondrous land,
> Joining the town and just at hand."

The music that enchanted the children of Hamelin seems hardly to differ from the images that captivate our own. Little wonder, then, that television can be so readily compared to the Pied Piper. The appeal of both is great.

How surprising it is then that not one of the TV Networks has a Children's Program Department, or a research bureau with experts in child psychology and education to suggest, and plan, and screen children's programs.

All these words that have been poured forth upon the problem of unsuitable children's programs can be summarized in the advice of Our Holy Father: "If television wishes to keep its brilliant promises, it ought to take care not to use those cheap tricks that are as much contradictory to good taste as to the moral sense. It ought to refrain from dealing with the unnatural products of a diseased spirit of our times. Television should rather endeavor to give recognition to genuine beauty and to all those wholesome, lofty and superior things that have been, and continue to be, created by the culture of mankind and, particularly, by the Christian religion." (Pentecost 1954.)



Sister Marie Charles

"Fourth 'R'" is presented over WNBT at 8:00 A. M. on Sunday.

WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT TV?

"The Queen had only one way of settling all difficulties, great or small. 'Off with his head!' "
— ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND.

THIS method has not lost favor with the years. Descendants of Lewis Carroll's Queen of Hearts are still with us. Whenever a difficulty seems too complex to solve, we hear them crying out, as though with one voice: "Off with his head!" They are the people from whom we get laws like prohibition. Drunkenness is evil; therefore, abolish drink; burn down the barn to exterminate the rats; chop off the child's head because he has no hat.

Today, because television presents difficulties, we hear the old cry, "Off with its head!" People who would recommend decapitation for baldness would abolish TV. You even find traces of the malady in the fellow who, biting his lips as though his shoes were too tight, discloses that he "never watches TV."

Forever, TV

Television is here to stay; it is not a fad. We could no more get rid of this so-called *enfant terrible* than we could dispose of the family auto. In fact, many youngsters cannot remember when their homes had no TV set. TV is a fixture chiefly because it is such a magnificent medium of communications. It has great possibilities, notably those of education, but it is primarily as a means of entertainment that TV now comes into our homes. With what ease you can see the Yankees or tune in the "Voice of Firestone!"

Family TV

The restoration of family balance, a major and creditable achievement of TV, is highlighted by Pope Pius XII, who reminds us that television can be effective in bringing the family together. "In recent times," said His Holiness, "the cinema, sports, not to mention the dire necessities of daily work, have increasingly tended to keep members of the family away from home, and thus the natural blossoming of domestic life is upset. We must be glad, then, that television contributes efficaciously to reestablish the balance, by providing the whole family with an opportunity for honest diversion together, away from the danger of bad company and bad places."

Before TV, the American house was rapidly becoming more of a headquarters than a home—a kind of garage—a filling station by day, a parking place by night. This used to be typical activity of an average family: The teenage boy charging out of the house, his dinner barely arrived at his digestive tract, bound for a night on the corner or careening about in an auto held together mainly by habit; the daughter headed for the movies, her mind weighted with the thought of where to sip her next black and white soda: mother cruising about town to pick up some of the cast for her club's production of "Big-Hearted Herbert"; and, poor father slipping off to a night baseball game.

Television to some extent is checking this flight from the home and is helping to restore the family circle, as Our Holy Father points out. But, as some wag observes, TV has brought the family together—in darkness. The new family circle is unquestionably a silent one. The chatty visitor is frustrated when he has to compete with the TV receiver. The art of conversation, however, was never a strong point of the American home. Television is not guilty here, nor is radio, although they could be considered accessories after the fact. There is much truth in this:

REUNION

Our family is so sociable;
Everyone says hello!
The dinner table crackles with
A live and friendly glow.
Guessing-games are started,
The latest news discussed,
The same as other homes in which
The TV set is bust!

—ALMA DENNY, *Town Journal*

Yet, spokesman for television point out that many TV programs are "feeders" for the bookstore and library. TV shows have increased interest in such subjects as archeology, ballet, social problems, and "do-it yourself" handicrafts, creating a huge demand for books about them.

For Goodness' Sake

Every right-hearted person admires the endearing qualities of children; their charming simplicity, their innocence and modesty, their disarming candor, their loyalty and enthusiasm, their trusting confidence, and wholesome wonderment. Children are hero-worshipers and imitators. They copy anything they like, anything that appeals to them.

Note, however, that surveys point out that the formula for many TV children's shows is too narrow. Rarely does any TV program stimulate youngsters to worthwhile activities, such as in TV's "Ding Dong School" or "The Fourth R." TV, for the most part, has neglected the "do it yourself" technique whereby children are encouraged to make something, to build, to paint, to sew, or to pursue other worthwhile hobbies like reading, taking music lessons, preparing scrapbooks, and research projects. Strangely enough, as has

Dr. Frances Horwich in "Ding Dong School" presented at 10:00 A. M. Monday through Friday over WNBT.

"Funny Bunny," a new concept in Children's programming, features Dick Noel as the Rabbit who entertains daily over WABD at 5:30 P. M.

"Howdy Doody" presented at 5:30 P. M. Monday through Friday over WNBT.

been said previously, TV has in many instances stimulated "do it yourself" activities among adults.

If your little girl goes beyond applauding the clowns in Super Circus and the Big Top and decides to organize the neighborhood kids into her own production, she has gained something worthwhile from television. When television sparks the creative instinct in your child, you should nourish it, cherish it—and be grateful to TV. An interest in music, in drama, in civil affairs gained through television should be encouraged. Your children may not be Mozarts, Shakespeares, or U. S. Senators, but the cultivation of these interests aroused by television will raise them above the ordinary. They will be getting a return for the countless hours they invest in television.

Television's capacity for good is perhaps the principal reason why we should not join the simplicists and cry "Off with its head!" TV is like the youngster of great potential goodness and beauty who never seems to take final shape, who is forever teetering; now inclining toward right, now leaning toward wrong. But, when properly directed, TV—one of the most important inventions in the field of communications—can be a tremendous force for good. The responsibility for TV is in the hands of intelligent and capable people, its future depends entirely upon the kind of guidance these people presently offer to this rapidly growing teenager of the communications field.

TV's Responsibility

The people who make television tick realize their responsibility. William S. Paley, Chairman of the Board of the Columbia Broadcasting System, addressed the 1954 Convention of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters on "The Road to Responsibility."

"When television added broadcast sight to broadcast sound," Mr. Paley stated, "broadcasting then became the broadest means of interchanging, communicating and diffusing ideas, moods, sights, emotions, facts, images . . . and also confusion—in the history of man."

The responsibility of the TV industry has also been stated in The Preamble to the Television Code of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters. The following is an excerpt from this Code: "Television is seen and heard in every type of American home. These homes include children and adults of all ages, embrace all races and all varieties of religious faith, and reach those of every educational background. It is the responsibility of television to bear constantly in mind that the audience is primarily a home audience, and consequently that television's relationship to the viewers is that between guest and host." The Code continues: "Television and all who participate in it are jointly accountable to the American public for respect for the special needs of children, for community responsibility, for advancement of education and culture, for the acceptability of the program materials chosen, for decency and decorum in production, and for propriety in advertising. This responsibility cannot be discharged by any given group of programs, but can be discharged only through the highest standard of respect for the American home applied to every moment of every program presented by television."

The industry, therefore, recognizes its tremendous responsibility and, in most cases, tries to fulfill the lofty sentiments expressed in The Television Code.

PARENTS AND TV

It may sometimes happen that, in spite of the TV Code, a morally offensive program may be telecast. If a TV show is immoral, we most certainly have a moral obligation to shut it off. We must avoid the occasions of sin wherever they may be. Even though the program may be entering the cushioned comfort of our own home, a flick of the dial is not only a convenience, it sometimes becomes a moral necessity. Often viewers have given me, blow by blow, quote by quote, accounts of TV shows that they should not have been watching. There is no dual standard of morality; an immoral program does not become moral simply because it filters through television.

You as a parent have also a grave responsibility to encourage worthwhile programs. This responsibility is neatly stated in the Preamble to The TV Code. "In order that television programming may best serve the public interest, viewers should be encouraged to make their criticisms and positive suggestions known to the television broadcasters. *Parents in particular should be urged to see to it that out of the richness of television fare, the best programs are brought to the attention of their children.*"

TV Versus the Children

Four facts emerge in this consideration of children and television:

1—TV has a tremendous influence upon children.

2—Many children spend too much time viewing TV.

3—There is a need for more suitable programs for children.

4—Parents must be more vigilant about their children's viewing habits.

MAGIC COTTAGE

Pat Meikle is Hostess-storyteller on the popular daily Children's series, "Magic Cottage." The WABD series, seen at 6:00 P. M., combines fairy tale adventures with amusing cartoon episodes.

Parental Lock and Key

Parental control and guidance could remedy the abuses of television. Consider this matter of control, for instance. A sensible way to begin control is to reduce the time your child spends before the picture tube. This may not be a popular recommendation with you, your child, or with the television industry. Restricted activity that consumes over fourteen hours a week, however, seems excessive. When televiewing rivals time spent in school or in outdoor recreation, a halt must be called.

Who's the Boss of Your Home?

The belief that whoever controls the TV dial is the head of your home can be defended. When a parent firmly controls the TV set, there is no room for consternation in the household. The TV set should, when possible, occupy a den or the children's playroom. It should not be installed in the living room as the center about which all family activity revolves, a kind of modern hearthstone.

Most parents would immediately expel from their homes any loud-mouthed guest who insisted on telling the children unsuitable stories. At least, in some way, the subject would be changed or the children dismissed from the room. Why do parents allow the TV set to change their household manners and morals?

TV surveys show that parents fall into four television categories:

1—Those who are dead set against owning a set. To them TV is a menace, a thief of time, and the marijuana of the nursery.

2—Those who have it and allow TV to run their homes, permitting the children unrestricted use of it.

3—Those who have it and are absolute ruler of it—the iron hand on the plastic dial parents.

4—Those who have it and share it intelligently with their children. The parents in this last classification have a most desirable attitude toward television. An intelligent hand on the TV dial bespeaks an intelligent household. You will find gentle guidance and moderate control where you find intelligence.

Is TV Unique?

A common failing is to treat television as though it were unique when, actually, it is only a new switch on an old problem: how to find wholesome recreation for children. The TV set is in the same class of indifferent objects as the radio, the "comic" books, the movies. That it maybe used sensibly and properly requires parental vigilance.

Admittedly, TV is the chief distraction of the mechanical tribe, but it must not be the master of your household. If TV is the only channel through which the life of your family flows, and you permit it to become swollen, to lap up all other streams of activity and all other currents in the home, then it will flood upon you in all its dire consequences. If TV is not to run the home, the parent must run TV.

Parents should make it clear to their children that television is only one of the many vehicles of entertainment available to them. Other worthwhile hobbies—coloring books, model airplanes, stamp collecting—when once cultivated, are bound to reduce the time spent in televiewing and to make easier the task of bringing under control the TV time factor.

Learn to Live With TV

Many parents find it profitable to treat their children as intelligent persons. Rather than constantly dictating policy and arbitrarily imposing harsh TV viewing conditions upon their children, these parents discuss the situation with the children and, taking them into their confidence, formulate a basic working agreement. The children are flattered to

be so treated as grown ups and family members and, thereby, respect the confidence of their parents. A common method in this mode of operation is the "contract plan."

TV Contracts For the Family

One family, in which the father is a lawyer, actually drew up a contract. The children see TV at definitely stated times in return for which they perform certain chores around the house. TV never interferes with play time, homework, study, meals, and bed. Exceptions are granted, of course, when unusual programs are scheduled. This contract plan works.

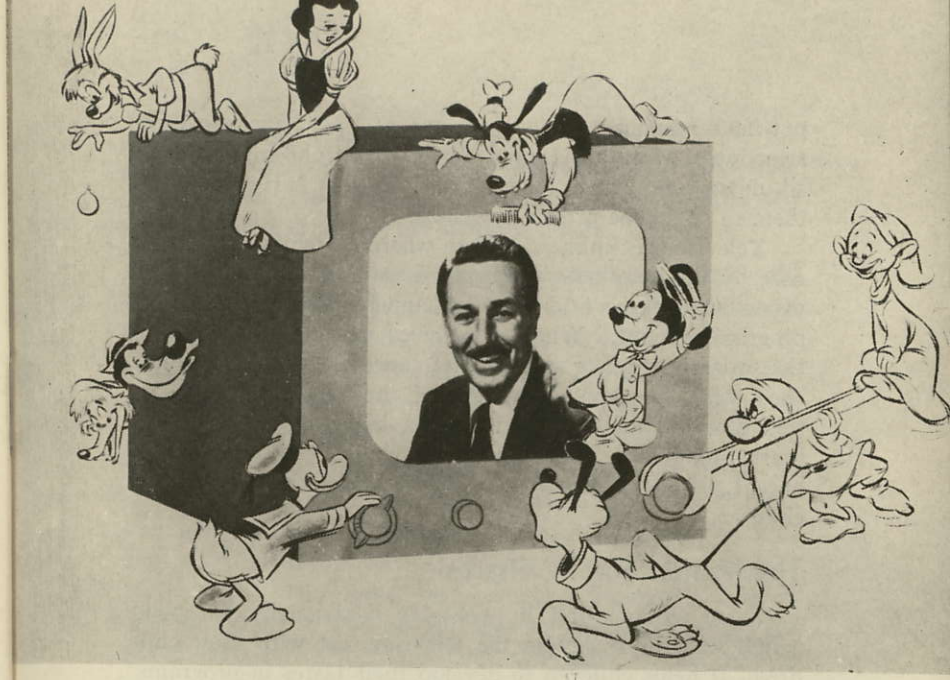
Another family set up a deadline for viewing. If anyone objected to this deadline, he disqualified himself from TV the following night.

One family adopted a policy of voting on the program they would see. Conflicting programs were alternated. For example: "Toast of the Town" and the "Colgate Comedy Hour" were seen on alternate Sunday nights.

Running through all of these plans is a disposition to work out the problem and a condition of operation. A condition is such a commonplace of daily living that we often miss its importance. On the condition of health, we hold our life; on the condition of obedience, Adam and Eve held their high nature before the Fall. As yet there has appeared no adequate substitute for this system whereby the parent extends a privilege to the child on a certain condition, violation of which cancels the privilege. Modern thought has not completely overruled the value of the old-fashioned theory of candy-for-a-good-child, bed-and-a-spanking-for-a-bad-one.

The Choice of TV

Does it seem too much in this television age to ask that we recover the excellent custom of family reading, wherein the mother or the father reads to the children? If we can-



not have reading selections, we can at least have television selections. If father cannot read to the children, he can sit down and watch television with them. He can help them to select the proper programs.

Television is unlike a library wherein a child may ruminate by the hour before he chooses a book. In some television areas there is only one channel. His choice is this program or none. What ever choice exists is exercised by the program director whose chief concern is the mass audience, what to provide for most of the people watching at this time. Your child is merely a blurred section of the marketing mosaic that guides his choice. It is you, the parent, who must watch out for the interest of your own children.

The Market For TV Shares

Some parents find it profitable occasionally to spend a half hour or so before the television set with their children. It helps children to develop their tastes in programs, and places parents on firmer ground when they wish to take steps against a certain kind of show. These parents are thereby in the position of *sharing* the pleasure of television with their children.

Sharing is also a worthwhile activity. If parents could share this activity of televiewing with their children, the TV problem would be nearer to a solution. Share television from the first moment of driving out to buy a set, through the pleasurable anxiety of making a selection, down to the final moment when the switch clicks off and Wonderland fades into darkness.

Parents must be as selective of the food that their children put into their minds and their hearts as they are about the food their children eat.

By sharing television you can encourage your child to fan into flame those creative sparks which TV frequently can strike, thus fostering an enjoyment of life and an education for living.

By sharing television you can help the child to develop a set of critical standards, without which all children—be they grimy-faced youngsters of six or smooth-faced elegant children of sixty—are helpless before TV.

Appreciation of these critical standards, of course, will depend upon the child's age and ability. A TV drama influences morals because it presents ideals of human conduct. In dealing with life and conduct the show inevitably presents or implies a moral set of standards, and it tends to persuade an audience to accept that standard. If the standard be true, the TV drama is an agency for good. If the standard be false, the drama is an evil influence. Parents can help children to appraise dramatic programs by asking such questions as: "Did you like that program?" "Why?" "Did it appear real enough to happen?" "Did it uphold virtue?" "Did the evil appear too attractive and the good unattractive?" "Was your sympathy on the side of wrong-doing?" "Did it violate any sensibilities?" "Did it impart a worthwhile lesson?"

Regardless of how much time a child spends at a television set there must be vigilance and a shaping of his viewing habits. If a child's television experience is only one hour a day, and if that hour is an unrelieved interval of unnatural preoccupation with violence and less desirable plot situations, then his TV take-away is less desirable than that of a child who might watch for three hours a day but within the framework of an intelligently constructed viewing pattern set up by parents or guidance groups.

Teenagers should be encouraged to watch the better TV panel discussions, such as "Youth Forum" and "Meet the Press." While not necessarily agreeing with the viewpoints expressed, they will sharpen their critical faculties by such healthy discussions of opinion and they will be encouraged to articulate their convictions.

Learn to Live Without TV

An editorial in *TV Guide* gives practical advice to a bewildered mother with a new TV set.

" 'We're a tray family,' a lovely lady told us recently. 'My children don't know what it is to eat dinner at a table. Every evening we haul our trays up to the TV set, which is in our guest room, to eat. It's awful. Why don't you do something about it?'

" 'It's your problem,' we pointed out, 'and it's up to you to solve it.' Then we suggested that most homes have definite times for eating, and television is not permitted to interfere with meals.

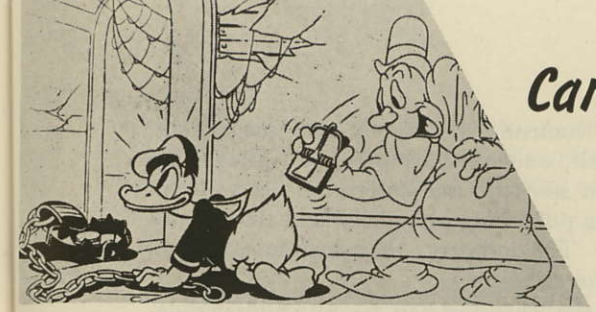
"Perhaps, instead of 'too late,' she should have said, 'too much trouble.' It's never too late to make a new start in the right direction, if the new start is worth the effort. And getting youngsters to eat dinner at the table should be worth the effort.

"One easy solution for our problem-mother might be to have the set develop a mysterious ailment that would require a couple of weeks' study by a repairman. In the absence of television, the kiddies might be introduced to a dinner table. There they possibly could become interested in Dad's report of the day at the office, or even Mother's blow-by-blow of the afternoon's Scrabble game. They might even learn to take part in the table chatter and find out about conversation which their ancestors enjoyed in place of television.

"Don't get us wrong. We love television. But family life is pleasant, too, and one should not obviate the other. Indeed, TV can be an important part of family life. Just a part, though."

TV Looks At TV

Spokesmen for the television industry are increasingly resentful of the mounting criticism of children's programs.



Cartoons

Super Circus

Princess Mary Hartline and ringmaster Claude Kirchner look on as clowns Scampy, Cliffy and Nicky join in off-key harmony during Super Circus, seen Sundays, 5 P. M., EDT, over the ABC-TV Network.

TV AND YOU

"Blessed are they who expect nothing,
for they shall not be disappointed."

— BISMARCK.

IF the American public expects nothing, it will get nothing, as Bismarck cynically stated. If we do nothing about getting better television, television will not get better. If we do not get what we like, we soon begin to like what we get.

Our apathy feeds TV's abuses. Should the medium swell into a monster, it will fatten on the pap of our indifference. This monster apathy must be slain. We have this almost as a command from the Holy Father himself. In unusually strong words, Pope Pius XII says:

"No one has the right to watch passively the rapid developments in television, when he realizes the extremely powerful influence it undoubtedly can exercise on the national life, either in promoting good or in spreading evil."

One could define apathy no better than "to watch passively." To go from apathy to action implies a goal and a means of obtaining it. How can we do something about television?

Who Controls TV?

We should become more interested in television when we realize that we are the owner of it. The real control of American television is in the hands of the public. The wave lengths of the air have been deeded in perpetuity to us, the people of America, and in our interest the Federal Communications Commission—the FCC—supervises the use of these air waves.

Under the Communications Act of 1934, the FCC is empowered to grant and to revoke station licenses. While it does not censor telecasts, its warnings to stations carry weight. You should inform the FCC when you consider that a TV station has violated any of the FCC regulations.

On March 1, 1952 a code of standards and practices for the television industry went into effect. This Television Code, the Preamble to which we have already referred, is a voluntary and sincere attempt by the industry to regulate itself. It pinpoints the do's and don'ts of TV production and is administered by the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters (NARTB). A copy of the Code may be obtained at the NARTB office in Washington. To this Code the four TV networks and over 60% of the TV stations subscribe. The Seal of Good Practice, reproduced in the appendix, is a pledge by the subscribing stations that they abide by the spirit and letter of this Code. Should a subscribing station violate any of the tenets of the Code, the seal would be withdrawn. Subscribing stations display this seal.

The NARTB is most anxious to co-operate in the improvement of television and welcomes your intelligent comments on the programs in your locality. After all, the more alert, interested and constructive we are in our criticism of TV, the more fully we let the TV industry know what we want, and what we don't want, the better the stations can fulfill their responsibility, since their first and foremost job is to serve the public.

In a section entitled, "Responsibility Toward Children," the TV Code blueprints the producer's obligations regarding children's programs:

1. The education of children involves giving them a sense of the world at large. Crime, violence and sex are a part of the world they will be called upon to meet, and a certain amount of proper presentation of such is helpful in orienting the child to his social surroundings. However, violence and illicit sex shall not be presented in an attrac-

tive manner, not to an extent such as will lead a child to believe that they play a greater part in life than they do. They should not be presented without indications of the resultant retributions and punishment.

2. It is not enough that only those programs which are intended for viewing by children shall be suitable to the young and immature. Attention is called to the general items listed under Acceptibility of Program Materials. Television is responsible for insuring that programs of all sorts which occur during the times of day when children may normally be expected to have the opportunity of viewing television shall exercise care in the following regards:

(a) In affording opportunities for cultural growth as well as for wholesome entertainment.

(b) In developing programs to foster and promote the commonly accepted moral, social and ethical ideals characteristic of American life.

(c) In reflecting respect for parents, for honorable behavior, and for the instituted authorities of the American community.

(d) In eliminating reference to kidnaping of children or threats of kidnaping.

(e) In avoiding material which is excessively violent or would create morbid suspense, or other undesirable reactions in children.

(f) In exercising particular restraint and care in crime or mystery episodes involving children or minors.

Our Holy Father recently stated that "one of the reasons for the spread of abuses and evils is not the lack of regulations, but the lack of reaction or the weakness of reaction of good people, who have not known how to make timely denunciation of violations against the public laws of morality."

How To Control TV

Suppose while you and your children are watching a TV program you become aware of some unwholesome material, a suggestive sequence, a questionable plot, some improper glorification, you immediately turn the dial and make a note to protest such an unsuitable program. The most effective method to protest is to address your complaint to the NARTB Television Code Review Board, Box 1711, Wasington 4, D. C. Your letter should be reasonable, courteous, without invective, intelligent and specific in its information: the name of the program, the channel, the time, and the reason for your complaint.

Should an offensive program be telecast over a station that does not subscribe to the TV Code, your most effective protest might be addressed to the program's title in care of the station on which the offending program is aired. Such mail always reaches the client's advertising agency.

Unintelligent criticism is, of course, ineffectual. "Father, did you see that shocking exhibition on Channel X last night?" "No, did you?" "Well, not exactly, but my friend next door told me all about it." Inquiry may discover that the neighbor never saw it either. It was his mother-in-law, or his son's teacher. Any such attempt to get an explanation from a producer or a sponsor with such evidence is like nailing a custard pie to the wall. To be effective, protests against unwholesome programming must be as spontaneous an expression of revulsion as is possible.

The Apostolate of the Pen

This letter writing crusade for better television programs could be the Apostolate of the Pen.

Here is an outline of a broad organizational plan for such an Apostolate: Throughout America there is a growing movement called Television Councils—or Listeners Councils—local groups whose members view programs and meet to exchange views on good shows and acceptable advertising. They exist so that decent people can inform the proper authorities what they desire in this vital matter of good programming. They co-operate with the NARTB or

directly with the stations, but always as a group dedicated to the improvement of the medium.

These Councils do not merely complain. Frequently they spearhead positive, creative work: They inform the stations of the results of their surveys, and notify the local press of their stand on various television issues, and work with producers in developing juvenile shows of high standards.

If there is no such Council in your area, you may be the person to start one. Such a TV Committee could be organized in one of your parish societies composed mainly of parents: the Holy Name Society, the Rosary Society, the Parent-Teachers, the various Knights.

Your TV Council

Here's how this plan would be set up: The President of your parish society would appoint as the TV Chairman a person with a broad cultural background, preferably a parent, or at least with an interest in children, such as a teacher. He must be even-tempered, and inclined to weigh matters before acting, for if he is quixotic, tilting at windmills, or if he goes around always crying "Wolf," like the silly shepherd's boy, then your TV Committee will be ineffective.

This TV Chairman would then select several people interested in TV programming to work along with him. This TV Committee would monitor and report to their organization the TV programs in this area. A Parish Television Council might later be formed comprising the chairmen and the members of the TV Committee in the various parish societies.

The goal of this Apostolate must ever be kept before us: Better TV programs. We must not be a group of lethargic literates, but we must, as Our Holy Father urges, "make our presence felt in this field before it is too late." In a positive, constructive manner we must make known our plans for good TV programs.

Accentuate the Positive

We all seem to be remiss in an effective kind of positive action. Did you ever write a letter of thanks to the sponsor or to the station for some good TV program? Many people plan to drop a line of encouragement, but never get around to it. It seems so much easier to be negative, to criticize, to protest and to boycott.

At Christmas 1952, the American and the National Broadcasting Networks telecast Midnight Mass from St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. This largest hookup in the history of religious telecasting was witnessed by eleven million people. Yet only five people took the trouble to write a letter of appreciation to the stations. This does not even approximate the Biblical percentage of one in ten who returned to give thanks. With such a negligible audience reaction, it is difficult to persuade the networks that this is a popular public service program. You cannot take good TV programs for granted. You must work for them.

When a program pleases you, when it meets your standard as a Catholic parent, why not let the station and the sponsor know? Be as swift to praise as you are to protest. Sometimes a producer may be wondering whether a certain program has gone over with the audience; your pat on the back may go a long way to continue these wholesome TV programs. Several worthwhile programs have gone off the air simply because good people never gave them any encouragement. Maybe you are wondering why that program which you never missed last year is not on the air this year. Frankly, that program has been buried because people like you who enjoyed it never did anything to show their appreciation.

We, who by God's grace are privileged to live in America where we can express our wills freely, have only to blame ourselves if we cede the right of decision to those who knowingly or unwittingly lend themselves to a fostering and familiarization with the depraved and the despicable.

Edmund Burke rightly stated, "The one thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing."

"What's wrong with television?" multitudes are asking. "The lazy people who watch it," I loudly reply. TV is only a tool. So long as parents remain passive and put all the blame for poor programs on the industry, TV will be a tool poorly used.

We hold the future of television in our hands. An instrument of much hope, TV can help to mold a richer, stronger life for all of us.

May we be active, intelligent, capable, responsible and articulate!

USEFUL ADDRESSES

AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANY
ROBERT E. KINTNER, *President*
7 West 66th Street, New York 23, N. Y.
20 North Wacker Drive, Chicago 6, Ill.
1539 North Vine Street, Hollywood 28, Calif.

NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY
SYLVESTER L. WEAVER, JR., *President*
30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.
Radio Network Merchandise Mart, Chicago 54, Ill.
Sunset Boulevard and Vine Street, Hollywood 28, Calif.

DUMONT TV NETWORK
TED BERGMANN, *President*
515 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y.

COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM
FRANK STANTON, *President*
485 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y.
1313 North Vine Street, Los Angeles 28, Calif.
410 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill.

THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
New Post Office Building, Washington 25, D. C.

THE TELEVISION CODE REVIEW BOARD
1771 North Street N.W., Washington 6, D. C.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