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# Broadcasting And Regulation

Inept broadcasters are less threat to a free nation than government watchdogs are, Larry H. Israel, chairman of Post-Newsweek Stations, charged yesterday at the University of Missouri's Journalism Week at Columbia, Mo.

He said the industry is constantly being asked to assert more responsibility for its programming at the very time government action narrows the field of the broadcaster's responsibility.

Israel received an award for distinguished service in journalism for news and public affairs programming.

"Even the most well-intentioned regulatory action by government inexorably involves the government in that which is being regulated," Israel said. "The process may be tolerable and even desirable in the setting of freight rates or the fixing of standards for meat, but it is deleterious to the practice of broadcast journalism."

He criticized the "Fairness Doctrine," and said the "numerous guidance letters" from the Federal Communications Commission have created "perplexing, chilling parameters" within which broadcasters must operate.

Israel argued that the same factors that have kept the printed press from too many abuses, even though it is not regulated by government, would operate for broadcast journalism if government stepped out of the picture.

"The government should be removed entirely from the day-to-day business of broadcast journalism," he emphasized. "... this means

that the FCC should hold each licensee accountable at license renewal time for his overall record only. It would mean an end to the impossible and dangerous practice by the government of attempting to quantify fairness by holding a stopwatch to specific issues on a complaint-by-complaint basis."

He urged "immediate action" by broadcasters to eliminate violent children's programs and said it was unfair to put the whole burden on the networks. Stations in the major markets, he said, "should assume responsibility for at least three hours of locally originated children's shows on Saturdays 'devoid of any gratuitous violence-action cartoons,' and should cut their commercials in children's shows in half and cluster them at opening and close.

He urged stations in top markets to program "of their own volition" at least two of the seven prime-time half-hours recently opened up to them for "non-entertainment locally originated programming."

Israel said the government's antitrust suit against the networks was "baffling."

"It is incomprehensible that the Justice Department is apparently seeking to destroy network entertainment program responsibility and turn the networks into transmission lines, merely brokering time for advertiser bidding, while simultaneously other government agencies badger and pressure for greater responsibility, for increased quality, more children's programming, balance, fairness and uplift."