

TV Convention Coverage Is Criticized by Senators

Parties Should Control Programming—Long

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Gale McGee, D-Wyo., stirred Senate criticism of television coverage of national party conventions Wednesday with a proposal to abandon public galleries and bar news representatives from the convention floor.

McGee told the Senate that the presence of "news types" intermingling with the delegates at the Chicago Democratic convention contributed to "confusion and near bedlam."

To solve this, he said the public galleries ought to be closed and reporters and cameramen assigned to operate only in this space. He said that if newsmen want to interview a delegate, they should call him off the floor.

The Wyoming Senator said he had received many letters with the "frightening" suggestion that the government take over the telecasting of conventions. He said he doesn't want anything like that to happen and thinks the news media should act to improve coverage before the government or somebody else does.

"The media should take the lead before the politicians or some government agency feel impelled to act without the rightful and proper consultation and cooperation with the media," he said.

Sen. Russell B. Long, D-La., broke in to say that the political parties themselves should assume direction and control of

the televising of their conventions.

He said there was too much camera switching away from the platform speaker to "put on some little peanut quarrel on the floor" of the conventions.

Long said that CBS' Walter Cronkite and NBC's team of Chet Huntley and David Brinkley were on the picture tubes all of the time and they ought to let the conventions "have their own show, rather than another Huntley-Brinkley show."

Sen. George Murphy, R-Calif., who has programmed four Republican conventions, suggested that a bi-partisan committee be set up to confer with network officials to see what could be done to eliminate confusion on the floor.

But Murphy said the political parties can't presume to dictate what goes on the air. He said he explained this to former President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956 when Eisenhower insisted that what was disseminated at a Republican convention was a matter for the GOP to control.

He said the news media are going to continue to decide what they will report and convention officials might as well face that fact.