

FCC Chief Rips TV Monitor Plan

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Dean Burch yesterday characterized a suggestion that the FCC monitor network news programs.

The suggestion was contained in a memorandum made public Thursday in Washington, in which former White House aide Jeb S. Magruder outlined to H.R. Haldeman, who was then White House chief of staff, methods of countering what was considered unfavorable news coverage.

Burch, here to address the Western Regional meeting of the National Association of Broadcasters, told a Stanford Court press conference:

"I think (an FCC monitoring) would be abominable. There is certainly no advantage in a regulatory agency monitoring . . . such a sensitive areas as news."

Burch said the FCC does not monitor television stations as a regular matter, anyway. If an applicant for a TV license challenges the incumbent holder, "the burden of proof is on the challenger."

Asked if he felt that network news reporting of the Nixon administration has been "vicious, distorted, frantic and hysterical," adjectives used by President Nixon in his press conference a week ago, today, Burch replied:

"I do not think it would be becoming of me, as chairman of a regulatory agency, to characterize network news.

" . . . I believe the media have the duty . . . to be objective, fair and complete as they can. But I also believe a governmental remedy is worse than no remedy at all."

MEMO

With regard to the Magruder memo, written in 1969, and released by U.S. Senator Lowell Weicker (Rep.-Conn.), a member of the Senate Select Committee on Campaign Practices, Burch said:

"No one from the White House or the Committee to Re-elect the President has ever approached me to suggest the FCC begin a monitoring system."

He did say earlier, in a Fairmont Hotel speech to the broadcasters, that "it is a tragedy that a country this size is limited to three (network) news sources. But I just don't see how, technically and economically, the situation can be changed."

Cable-TV, on a national basis, could do it technically, Burch said, but added, "it would be fantastically expensive."

PROGRAMS

On another matter, Burch expressed his dissatisfaction with Saturday morning TV cartoon programs for children.

"They're cheaply made, where only the eyebrows and one lip move, and with the huckstering, every child in this country should have rotten teeth.

"Almost everything they sell is ingestible, and most of that contains sugar."