

SUBSCRIPTION TELEVISION

MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1967

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND POWER,
COMMITTEE ON INTERSTATE AND FOREIGN COMMERCE,
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met at 10 a.m., pursuant to notice, in room 2123, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Torbert H. Macdonald (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. MACDONALD. The hearing will come to order.

The hearing this morning is on H.R. 12435 dealing with subscription television. I think that under the circumstances, because of some of the misapprehensions that I have heard circulated, perhaps at the outset I would like to briefly review the history of subscription television and our interest as a committee in it.

As all of us know, the Federal Communications Commission first authorized experimentation with over-the-air subscription television in 1950. Early experiments were conducted in New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Subsequently, a much broader experiment was undertaken beginning in 1962 in Hartford, Conn. I also know, although it is not here on the slip, that there was some experiment held in a suburb outside of Toronto, Canada, I believe.

The experiment in Hartford has recently been concluded. Since the conclusion of the Hartford experiment the Federal Communications Commission has proposed an order establishing certain rules to regulate the operation of subscription television throughout the country.

These hearings today are not concerned with the content of that proposed order and the regulations which the Commission now has under study. That proceeding involves the substance of the form that subscription pay regulations should take. We are not concerned with those in these hearings but what we are concerned with are more basic questions.

Namely, should Congress authorize subscription television? Should Congress prohibit subscription television? Will subscription television serve the public interest? These hearings, therefore, are held for two basic purposes.

First, Congress has delegated to this committee the responsibility to oversee the operations of certain independent regulatory agencies and to make certain that each is acting within the scope of its statutory authority.

As we on the committee so well know and most of you in the room are well aware, those agencies were created by Congress and Congress