

We begin with the basic premise that today the programs of our present television system are free to the viewer, and that the sponsor pays the cost.

It is now proposed that we jump headlong in a radically different direction. Let the viewer pay. In other words, it is advocated that a tax, a nongraduated tax, if you please, be imposed on the one who turns the knob. The television spectrum is (and this cannot be repeated too often) a national resource belonging to the people.

To put it bluntly, pay television is like unto wheat grown on my land, harvest reaped by others, with a demand made upon me for the payment of rent.

Pay TV will affect every viewer in the land since we know well that the level of income has no bearing at all upon ownership of a television set. There are some 55 million television homes in the United States. Over 90 percent of those in the \$4,000-and-under income own sets. Let us ignore them, shall we?

After all, what place do these viewers have in this argument? Indeed, let them eat cake. In other words, "the hell with them."

Logically, then it follows our networks, as they have stated in the past, will reach into this field. This intention was reaffirmed by network spokesmen before the FCC last week.

Again assuming the success of pay TV, we are very likely to see a dismaying competition between sponsored television and pay TV for major sporting events, movies, leading personalities, et cetera, if indeed the networks have not by that time moved completely into that area.

I say that to turn the cost—and I have said this before—of a television set into a mere downpayment to be followed by a lifetime of installment charges for the privilege of enjoying a public resource would be an act of complete irresponsibility and an utter disregard of the public interest.

Sponsored TV is surely capable of "good" programs—and that, of course, is a value word—and that it has not done so is due certainly in part to the laxity and ineptitude of the Federal Communications Commission, partly to the apathy of the public, and partly to the short-sightedness of the networks.

Instituting pay TV will unquestionably relax the responsibility placed on the Commission and the present broadcasting systems.

Let us face the fact and face it squarely—that television for profit, whether free or toll, whether paid for by the advertiser or the viewer by a set fee, must remain a popular medium to succeed.

The viewer at all times has a privilege of selectivity. The viewer who prefers the so-called cultural programs is by his very nature a highly selective creature. Hence, pay TV will not change the nature of the problem. The heart of the problem lies in the television industry itself, and, as I have said before, both in the viewing public and the regulating agency as well.

When it comes to programing, I believe that the television industry is as much a victim of the rating practices as is the viewer, and whether there is or is not pay TV the level of TV will remain what it is unless the industry and the FCC assume the responsibilities with which they are charged. If pay TV is to be profitable the very same problems which beset the industry today will drown pay TV operations.