

broadcasting to become informed upon controversial issues so that the people and the candidates may learn which issues are worthy of attention in the campaign.

Any inquiry into the equal opportunities and fairness doctrines must take into account the importance in the free society of the opportunity for dialog on the issues of our time. In a free society, sound decision-making depends upon an informed public. If broadcasters are free to present one-sided broadcasts on vital issues, or to avoid broadcasts on vital issues, or to promote the candidacy of one office seeker while denying access to his opponent, the people may well be misinformed—rather than informed—and the purpose of political elections could be frustrated.

The principal distinction between totalitarianism and the free society is that in the free society the person has an opportunity to participate in making the vital decisions of his time. We need more dialog—not less. The lack of timely adequate forums for dialog on the issues of the day was a significant factor in the race riots of the past three summers and in the protest movements on the university campuses.

Broadcasting has had an impact upon newspapers, many of the large newspapers in our great cities having dissolved. Today society is not as fully served by newspapers as a forum for vital issues as it was in the prebroadcasting days. More reliance has been placed on broadcasters to provide this service.

The problems of society grow ever more complex and the time for decision shortens. There is a dire need in our country today for forums which hold quite regular sessions on the issues of public concern and which encourage concerned people to bring significant public problems to the forum for fruitful dialog. The equal opportunities and fairness doctrines have been developed to facilitate dialog and effective political process. For the present, broadcasting is the best forum which we have for dialog on controversial issues of public importance.

Earlier in these comments, it was noted that the equal opportunities and fairness doctrines are related to other major policy decisions in applying the public interest standard to broadcasting, and that a change in these doctrines relating to political campaigns and controversial issues might well impair other important doctrines adopted by the Commission to protect the public interest in broadcasting.

Solely for the purpose of discussion, let us assume that the Supreme Court in the *Red Lion* case and the *Radio Television News Directors Association* case holds that the fairness doctrine is unconstitutional, or that the Congress, in implementation of possible recommendations of this subcommittee, declares the fairness doctrine beyond the scope of the public interest standard. What would be the effect upon other regulations adopted by the Commission to implement the public interest standard?

If the fairness doctrine, a cornerstone of the public interest standard, should be removed, would a substantial part of the public interest structure collapse?

If broadcasters should be relieved of the duty to practice fairness in broadcasts of programming on controversial issues or of the duty to provide equal opportunities to political candidates, would it be reasonable thereafter to require broadcasters to make a good-faith effort to ascertain and fulfill less important programming needs of the community?