

American Cancer Society or HEW, will cause a debasement of the Fairness Doctrine generally, and a substitution of Commission fiat for licensee judgment. CBS in particular noting that commercials are by nature repetitive and continuous, urges that treating all cigarette commercials as presentations of one side of a controversial issue will raise a question as to whether any one program or program series—however enlightening and informative as to all points of view—can constitute an adequate opportunity for response. Asserting that inevitably the licensee's only recourse will be a series of health hazard spot announcements, CBS states that broadcast treatment of cigarette health issues should not be reduced to a contest of opposing spot announcements endlessly repeated long after any member of the public has understood and acted if he wished. It further asserts that such an approach makes no sense in the area of news and public affairs programming and that the net result of our ruling will be to convert licensee responsibility in such areas to presentations very similar to product advertising.

40. Like CBS, we recognize that the presentation of one side of a controversial issue of public importance in advertising programming poses a situation which differs from that usually pertaining to the presentation of controversial issues in news and public affairs programming. In the latter instance, the issue may arise only once, or a few times, or several times in a relatively short time period because of factors such as timeliness. But as CBS points out, commercials are by nature "repetitive and continuous"; the complaint here went to advertisements broadcast daily for a total of 5 to 10 minutes each broadcast day. We think that the frequency of the presentation of one side of the controversy is a factor appropriately to be considered in our administration of the Fairness Doctrine under the Act's basic policy of the "standard of fairness" (*supra*, par. 10). For, while the Fairness Doctrine does not contemplate "equal time", if the presentation of one side of the issue is on a regular continual basis, fairness and the right of the public adequately to be informed compels the conclusion that there must be some regularity in the presentation of the other side of the issue. This consideration is not limited to advertising. For example, if one side of a controversial issue of public importance were regularly presented in a daily network program, compliance with the Fairness Doctrine would require something more than an occasional presentation of the other side of the issue during the course of the year.

41. Moreover, here the controversial issue posed is one of health hazard and the repeated and continuous broadcasts of the advertisement may be a contributing factor to the adoption of a habit which may lead to untimely death. In the circumstances, we think that the licensee is under a higher duty than in the case of other controversial issues to ameliorate the possible harmful effect of the broadcasts by sufficiently informing the public as to the hazard. As indicated in our ruling, and in light of the considerations set forth in paragraphs 33-34 and 60-61, we believe that the frequency of the presentation of the one side and the nature of the potential hazard to the public here necessitates presentation of the opposing viewpoint on a regular basis (e.g., each week).

42. We note that, contrary to CBS' position, the repetition of short communications has apparently been regarded by the broadcasting and advertising industries and other interested organizations as an effective means of reaching the listener or viewer. But in any event, there is nothing in our ruling which compels a licensee to treat the issue through presentation of spot messages. In our ruling we stated: "A station might, for example, reasonably determine that the above-noted responsibility would be discharged by presenting each week, in addition to appropriate news reports or other programming dealing with the subject, a number of the public service announcements of the Cancer Society or HEW in this field." This example does not on its face indicate that the opposing viewpoint should be presented solely or principally through spot announcements, as it was not intended as a "Commission fiat" as to the manner of compliance with the Fairness Doctrine.²⁴ We stressed in the ruling, and here strongly emphasize again,

²⁴ As set forth in par. 25, prior to our ruling the American Cancer Society received favorable responses from all the networks and many independent stations concerning the promotion of its spots on smoking and health. Moreover, the Public Health Service reported in January 1967 that it had distributed spot announcements to over 900 radio stations and was then approaching individual television stations to obtain further coverage for its messages. The example we gave merely took cognizance of the fact that such material is available to licensees if, in their judgment, its use would facilitate compliance with their obligations under the Fairness Doctrine. We thought it desirable to note its availability particularly for the small station with limited resources, which might have difficulty in preparing its own program material dealing with this issue.