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'TV Wastes Time, Effort,
Distorts Life:' Hearing

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--The most degrading aspect of television is the "commercial" and to attack the sexuality and violence on TV without going to the root of the system--profit--is wasting time and effort, a Baptist college professor said during a regional hearing on TV and morality here.

Arguing against theories that TV exists to communicate and entertain, Robert L. Perkins, professor and chairman of the University of Alabama's department of philosophy, told a Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Christian Life Commission panel, "Precious little is ever communicated" via television.

"Since so little is presented for consumption by rational and cultivated minds, one is driven to the conclusion that the purpose of TV is not to communicate at the rational level," but is instead, profit motivated, he cited.

Perkins was one of several witnesses and respondents at the hearing, the second in a series of four regional hearings being sponsored across country by the Christian Life Commission. The first was in Dallas. The next two will be in Richmond, Jan. 11, and San Francisco in early February.

Persons testifying cited violence, sexual exploitation, screen murders, drug abuse, and other forms of immorality they said is depicted on television. One witness decried influence of TV on children, while others suggested ways the public could help to influence better programming.

One witness, Jack Brymer, managing editor of the Alabama Baptist, news publication of the Alabama Baptist State Convention, suggested that criticism aimed at television often is not supported by the facts.

"Society, not TV, determines the cultural level of television," Brymer testified, and noted that the television industry is a business supplying the public's demands.

"There are those who claim television has invaded our living rooms with too much violence and immorality," he continued, "but man is violent, especially western man, and he enjoys it."

Brymer cited the violence of sports and cartoons on television and that "Shakespeare's tragedies are bathed in blood. He used it as we do today to illustrate conflict, heighten tension and show the consequences of thought and action."

Perkins and other witnesses blasted television's so-called profit motive and "distorting of a realistic view of healthy living," as another witness said.

"This steady diet is having the effect of lowering our cultural level to mass-produced mediocrity," said Mrs. Catherine Allen of Birmingham.

Mrs. Allen, assistant to the executive director of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and director of public relations, questioned the moral and ethical fiber of those who write, edit, produce and fund television.

She further charged that television is totally lacking in a balanced presentation of the pleasant realities of life.

"Although I'm a media person with a thorough appreciation of the creative power of television and with appreciation for the economic value of advertising, I feel that I can best keep a small candle burning for moral civilization by not owning a television set," she concluded.

Perkins likewise charged that television is not dedicated to the weighing of values "anymore than it is to the discussion of issues.

"A couple of hours of decent, but frequently unrevealing, programming each week of interviews, such as 'Meet the Press,' does not justify TV's existence," he noted.

"There's just one thing wrong with the suggestion that TV's purpose is entertainment," Perkins continued. "Are we to assume the labor, investment, the endless search for talent, new ideas, a fresh concept is all just for our entertainment? What nonsense.

"The principle purpose for TV is profit," Perkins said, including local stations, networks and advertisers in the so-called "frantic desire" for profit.

"Since the whole plot hangs on profits, which in turn are dependent on ratings, he said, "anything that keeps up a rating is approved. "Cynical as that may appear, the combination of bad taste and desire for profit are the sources of the bestial sexuality and violence so much in evidence on TV," he added.

Perkins suggested two fundamental points of attack to make "great changes" in the television industry--the rating and financial systems.

And he made three recommendations to the panel:

1. That the regulatory agency license any and all responsible groups so that more competition can exist in the television industry;
2. That the rating system of the industry be changed from a "profit only" basis;
3. That the advertising budgets be taxed at 100 percent and the funds be used to fund the new rating agency and for use by educational TV.

Mrs. Louise Potts of Montgomery, another witness, decried the influence of television on young children:

"When a child witnesses a dozen or more screen murders in an afternoon and evening in his own home, day after day for years, he can't hold human life as sacred; nor can he regard the brutal ending of life a tragedy."

Mrs. Potts, a specialist in early childhood education and an employee of Alabama WMU, suggested that parents make rules concerning television viewing. She noted that pre-schoolers "act out what they see on television and that horror stories evoke bad dreams and continuing fears . . ."

She cited other effects, such as "give away" programs, which lead youngsters to think life "consists of being lucky."

John Jeffers, pastor of First Baptist Church, Auburn, Ala., said the ultimate responsibility for television programming rests at both ends, with the industry and the public.

Mrs. Charles L. Martin Jr., of Montgomery, suggested ways to improve the quality of programming, including "rewards to writers who portray a wholesome lifestyle that is enriching and uplifting," and by supporting sponsors of such programs.

She also suggested protests, such as writing postcards, as a legitimate method of attempting to influence programming.

O. Wyndell Jones, pastor of Highland Baptist Church, Florence, Ala., proposed that television programming should provide entertainment. He described entertainment as "a diversion from what is happening down the street," and called for shows that "restore virtue to the individual--both male and female--and which bring laughter and reveal justice."

In a question and answer period, following Brymer's testimony, the editor said he was opposed to government censorship and/or control of programming.

Brymer said he would rather take his chances with the public's judgment, than some official or agency.

African Child Rescued
By Son of Missionaries

GABORONE, Botswana (BP)--Gill Davidson, 16-year-old son of Southern Baptist missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Roy G. Davidson Jr., is credited with saving the life of an African child here.

Davidson was attending a December prayer retreat with the Baptist missionaries of Botswana when the group was alerted that someone was drowning in the Holiday Inn swimming pool.

Davidson immediately dived into the pool, reports said, pulled the young Botswana boy from the water and gave him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. After the child regained breathing, Southern Baptist missionaries took him to the local hospital where he reportedly responded to treatment.

The Davidsons are stationed in Gaborone, assigned to general evangelism and radio work.

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Tenn. Baptists to Build
Senior Citizens Facility

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12/13/76

NASHVILLE (BP)--Trustees for the Tennessee Baptist Service Corporation (TBSC) accepted a \$2,775,000 bid for construction of a 123-unit residence for elderly citizens to be built here.

The project temporarily called, "Belmont Plaza" is to be constructed on property near Belmont College, a Baptist school here.

Joe M. Rogers and Associates were selected as contractors with a bid of \$2,775,000. Bid acceptance is subject to the sale of bonds by the bank handling the project's financing, according to the Baptist and Reflector, news publication of Tennessee Baptists.

Trustees were told that financial arrangements could be worked out by Feb. 1, 1977, so that construction could begin at that time, and the contractor estimated the facility would be completed in 14 months.

The board's estimated total cost of Belmont Plaza was \$3,052,500. Board leaders emphasized that costs for completing the facility would stay within a \$5 million debt ceiling imposed on TBSC by "messengers" to the Tennessee Baptist Convention in November.

The TBSC was authorized by the 1974 Tennessee Baptist Convention to provide ministries and housing facilities for the aging.

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McCall Scholarship Fund
Exceeds \$25,000 Goal

Baptist Press
12/13/76

LOUISVILLE (BP)--A \$27,932 scholarship fund has been established at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary here in honor of "First Lady" Marguerite McCall, wife of the school's president.

The Marguerite McCall Scholarship Fund, established by the Woman's Committee at Southern, exceeded a \$25,000 goal in pledges and funds collected, a spokesman said.

Duke K. McCall, her husband, has been president of Southern Seminary 25 years.

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