THE NATIONAL CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR BROADCASTING:

A FORGOTTEN CHAPTER OF THE MEDIA REFORM

MOVEMENT OF THE 1960S AND 1970S

by

Beth Caron Fratkin

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

Department of Communication

The University of Utah

May 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the historical record of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting (NCCB), an organization that exemplifies the media reform movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This critical historical study illuminates the organizational structure and communication strategies used by the NCCB during a time period when it was effective not only in raising the level of public discourse with regard to media reform issues, but also in mobilizing individuals and groups of citizens to assert their rights as interested parties in the regulatory process.

Although the issues that concern the public discussion of broadcast and telecommunication policy have changed, some of the arguments advanced by the NCCB and the media reform movement of the 1960s and 1970s still resonate in contemporary public discourse. It is still important to advance media literacy programs and a critical perspective on media issues, it is still important to give communication scholars an opportunity to contribute to informed policy discussions, and it is still appropriate to encourage the public to use their power as consumers to influence the policy decisions that will affect the amount and type of information services they have access to. In addition, the results of this study serve to provide useful lessons for those contemporary organizations that wish to enlarge public discussion of telecommunications issues.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Dissatisfaction with the content, form, and function of the broadcast media in society is widespread. Parents are disturbed about the level of violence contained in the programs their children are watching, the amount of commercials their children are subjected to, and the messages that their children are receiving. Citizen groups are concerned about the lack of access to the media, the lack of diversity in coverage of public affairs, and the lack of minority representation in programming. Media critics are concerned about the proliferation of tabloid television, the abundance of *reality* programming, and the quality of news programs. Public policy law firms are alarmed at the increased consolidation of the industry in an age when deregulation has created a *wild west* mentality in the telecommunication industry, and academics are concerned about all of these issues.

The current social and political climate may be one in which segments of society are open to the discussion of media reform issues (Bagdikian, 2000; Engelman, 1996; McChesney, 1999). Since the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which liberated large corporations from having to meet any expectation of public service in local markets and eliminated most of the restrictions on the amount of media holdings that one entity can own, many regulators, citizens, and

academicians have begun to question the wisdom of deregulation (Aufderheide, 1999; Bagdikian, 2000; McChesney, 1999). There is a growing recognition that public broadcasting has, for the most part, failed to live up to its early promise and is more and more dependent on the commercial largess of the same corporations that support the system they had tried to provide an alternative to (Day, 1995; Engelman, 1996; Hoynes, 1994; Ledbetter, 1997; Starr, 2000; Witherspoon, Kovitz, Avery, & Stavitsky, 2000). Citizens from throughout the country are forming grassroots organizations and coalitions devoted to media reform issues. The microradio movement began when pirate radio broadcasters, armed with cheap transmitters, created volunteer radio stations that served their communities (Coopman, 2000a; Dunifer & Sakolsky, 1998; Yoder, 1996). After the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) shut down more than 500 of these unlicensed microradio stations, it was forced to consider legalizing the service. When more than 2,200 individuals and citizen groups expressed support for the service, the FCC decided to take applications from noncommercial community groups who wished to apply for licenses.

Starr (2000) formed Citizens for Independent Broadcasting (CIPB) in order to "put the public back into public broadcasting" (p. 3). The organization is calling for a massive overhaul of public broadcasting, and it seeks to create a public trust governed by a nonpartisan board that would provide a source of independent funding for public broadcasting. CIPB is a national membership organization with chapters throughout the country.

The Rocky Mountain Media Watch (RMMW) group borrowed a move from

citizen groups of the 1960s and 1970s when they filed petitions to deny the renewal of four Denver area television stations' licenses (Ostrow, 1998). Paul Klite, head of the group, explained that citizens are fed up with excessive violence on the local news. Klite said that citizens deserve more comprehensive coverage of the public affairs of their communities, and they want to see a more representative picture of their communities on local stations. The RMMW gained support of former FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson, Ralph Nader, and George Gerbner, among other luminaries.

Another sign that momentum might be building in the media reform movement is in the attention being given to this matter within the academy (Avery, 2001). An academic conference, *Public Broadcasting and the Public Interest*, held in June 2000 was well attended by activists and professors from throughout the country. The conference featured sessions on public broadcasting policy, community broadcasting, the Internet, and public interest, among other related topics. In fact, new channels of communication accessible by the Internet have spurred the development of forums for the exchange of information among like-minded individuals and organizations that seek media reform (Bagdikian, 2000; Coopman, 2000b).

Media reform movements are nothing new. Periodically, those concerned about the trajectory of the development of mass media have attempted to offer an alternative to commercial broadcasting, whereas others have attempted to reform the system that was already in place. What is new, however, is that the Internet and other emerging technologies that are readily accessible to individual citizens have the potential to threaten the traditional business models of commercial broadcasting

(Bagdikian, 2000; Negroponte, 1996; Rheingold, 1993). For those citizens who envision the possibility of enacting genuine media reform, this age of new technology offers enormous promise.

In order to assess the potential for contemporary reform efforts, it is essential to understand the historical context that fostered the growth of previous struggles. Although early attempts at media reform have been well documented in the literature, there has been a tendency by critical historians to overlook any movement that was not entirely successful in reforming the basic structure of American broadcasting. Consequently, there is an important gap that needs to be filled in the existing research. Documented accounts need to be enlarged to encompass the incremental successes of media reform groups that have attempted to fight these battles in an earlier era.

<center>Genesis and Justification of the Problem</center>

In the media reform environment of the 1960s and 1970s, citizens of this country were considering fundamental reforms to one of the most basic structures of society (Krasnow, Longley, & Terry, 1982; Ranly, 1976; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). One media reform group, the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting (NCCB), headed by Nicholas Johnson, a consumer-oriented former FCC commissioner, was an instrumental voice during that era (Branscomb & Savage, 1978; Grubb, 1996; Mosco, 1979; Witherspoon et al., 2000). Under Johnson's leadership, the NCCB was effective not only in raising the level of public discourse with regard to media reform issues, but also in mobilizing individuals and groups of citizens to assert their rights as interested parties in the regulatory process. There has been no comprehensive study that

examines the record of this organization that once claimed 16,000 members. An examination of the archival documents produced by the NCCB has uncovered information that can assist contemporary media reform organizations. Therefore, this study is an attempt to determine what lessons can be learned from examining the record of this high profile media reform organization when it was at its peak.

There is a renewed sense of hope on the part of contemporary media reform groups (e.g., microradio people, CIPB, RMMW, and the academic community) due in part to new developments in communication technologies and the renewal of public discussions surrounding the failure of the current system. The commercial model of broadcasting has yet to be definitively established on the Internet, and there is a possibility that real media reform can be accomplished within the realm of this and other new technologies. If contemporary citizen reform groups fall into the same patterns that limited success in earlier eras, they will be doomed to failure as well. The story of the NCCB from 1974 to 1978 is the story of the success of one citizen reform group. The organizational structure and the strategies used by the NCCB during this time period need to be illuminated so that contemporary reform groups can learn how to implement their own objectives. This study is a critical historical examination of the records created by the NCCB. A search of the media reform literature failed to uncover any comprehensive efforts to tell this story, but it is one that needs to be told.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to trace the efforts of the NCCB from 1974 to 1978—an era when it was successful in raising the level of public discourse with

regard to American broadcast media reform. An assumption underlying this study is that the successes of the NCCB during the period under investigation can inform the strategic plans of contemporary reform groups. This assumption defines the research goals of the study and the framing of the following research questions:

Research Question 1. To provide a context for this study, what are the important historical moments in American broadcasting when media reform organizations were able to influence public discourse?

Research Question 2. What were the social conditions and circumstances that led to the creation of the NCCB?

Research Question 3. What were the objectives for which the NCCB was established?

Research Question 4. To what extent did the NCCB meet with success in achieving its objectives during the tenure of Nicholas Johnson from 1974 to 1978?

Research Question 5. To what extent were the NCCB's successes sustainable?

Research Question 6. How did Nicholas Johnson structure the organization so that it could meet its goals?

Research Question 7. How did the NCCB communicate its goals to the public?

Research Question 8. What lessons can be gleaned from the experiences of the NCCB?

Research Question 9. Are the assessments of contemporary communication scholars with regard to the failure of Johnson's NCCB justified?

<u>Survey of the Literature</u>

The search of the literature originated with a general interest in the field of public broadcasting; thus, it began by identifying books and articles that focused on broad reviews of broadcast history. The literature search not only provided background knowledge, but it also served to identify authors whose works were repeatedly cited. Following a period of immersion in historical literature, a more specific focus on media reform efforts emerged. When it became apparent that there were hundreds of Web sites devoted in one form or another to calls for media reform, it led to a search for the historical foundations of the contemporary media reform movement. During this period, frequent references to one reform group that was particularly active during the 1960s and 1970s stood out. The NCCB, during the time period when Nicholas Johnson was its head, was frequently cited as an organization that had been effective in gathering public support for issues related to media reform.

The use of a number of variations on key words (*public broadcasting, broadcast reform, NCCB, and Nicholas Johnson*) yielded a plethora of scholarly research, trade publications, newspaper articles, and articles in the popular press from the following databases and indexes: *Academic Universe from Lexis-Nexis, Dissertation Abstracts; Digital Dissertations; EbscoHost Web databases; Expanded Academic ASAP; Searchbank; Communication Institute for Online Scholarship (CIOS), including Comm Abstracts, Comm Index, Comm Search, Index to Periodical Literature, New York Times Index, Research Index to the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB) Journals* (Avery, Burrows, & Pincus, 1980), Social

Science Citation Index, and UNIS. In addition, several Internet search engines were used to identify Web sites of interest.

After reviewing broad histories of broadcasting and public broadcasting, the search was narrowed to the following categories: (a) graduate academic research, (b) historical accounts of the development of the structure of broadcasting, (c) broadcast reform efforts, (d) contemporary accounts and critiques of broadcasting both commercial and public, (e) scholarly papers focusing specifically on broadcast reform of the 1960s and 1970s, and (f) information pertaining to current reform efforts.

Graduate Academic Research

The databases containing doctoral dissertations and master's theses were searched to determine the extent and scope of research exploring issues related to media reform. For the purposes of this study, research that dealt directly with the media reform movement of the 1960s and 1970s was reviewed.

The dissertation with the most direct relevance to this study was written in July 1976. It was an extensive examination of the social context and actions of groups that were working to reform the medium during the time period from 1965 to 1975 (Ranly, 1976). In his two-volume, 700-page study, Ranly discussed the social upheaval of the time period and focused on groups that were advocating for increased access to the media and looking for alternatives to the industry that many believed were not furthering the public interest. He discussed the alternative press movement, Action for Children's Television (ACT), the Citizens Communications Center (CCC), Accuracy in Media, Everett C. Parker and the Office of Communication of the United Church of

Christ, and the origins of the NCCB.

Wenner (1975) attempted to ascertain the level of citizen involvement in public television and discussed the early history of the NCCB. The original organization, the National Citizens Committee for Public Television (NCCPTV), was judged rather harshly. Wenner said that an organization whose board is comprised of *prominent* citizens is too elite to serve the citizens it is to be supporting. The time period studied ended before Nicholas Johnson became chair of the NCCB.

A dissertation written in 1991 provided background of the citizen media reform movement, but it was primarily a biography of Everett C. Parker (Korn, 1991). Nonetheless, Korn provided important contextual information about groups that were working for media reform during the time period of this study. He explained that the NCCB served as a focal point for the movement through publication of *access*, a magazine devoted to keeping groups throughout the country in touch with each other and with events in Washington, DC.

Last, Baughman's (1981) dissertation on activists who sat on the FCC from 1958 to 1967 was useful, detailing aspects of Nicholas Johnson's career on the FCC. Baughman focused on attempts to reform the regulatory body and examined Newton Minow's contribution as commission chair. Minow is the man Johnson called his role model. Baughman concluded that efforts to reform the FCC during the years he studied were futile at best. He attributed the failure to an entrenched philosophy of bureaucratic protection of the status quo, a lack of power to enforce FCC decisions, and the partisan infighting that characterized the FCC during the time he studied it.

Historical Structural Analysis of Broadcasting

Research in this category focused on the general development of wireless telegraphy as a forerunner of radio and how it developed into the broadcasting industry. Archer (1938), Barnouw (1966), and Sterling and Kittross (1990) emphasized the events that paved the way for the corporate control of a privately owned broadcast system. Douglas (1987) emphasized the role of amateurs and educators in the development of the medium. Czitrom (1982) based his historical analysis on the precedents set by the telegraph.

Historical analysis of the radio conferences that led up to the enactment of the Radio Act of 1927 are represented by scholars who suggested that regulators adopted one or all of previous models of regulation, the transportation model, the public utilities model, or the newspaper model when deciding how to structure the new industry (Blakely, 1979; Engelman, 1996; Krasnow et al., 1982; Mander, 1984; Sarno, 1969).

Streeter (1996) argued that the principles of corporate liberalism had been established by the time radio appeared on the scene, and the development of the industry was a continuation of these ideas. Accordingly, faith in expertise and functionalism and faith in technology as a neutral means of fulfilling social goals legitimized a commercial system of broadcasting controlled by a coalition of oligopoly corporations. Blakely (1979) supported this view. When discussing the failure of the broadcast reform movement of the 1930s, McChesney (1993) went one step further and argued that since the political system did not allow for any discussion of the

possibility that capitalism might sometimes fail to meet the needs of public service, reformers who argued for the creation of a publicly funded system of noncommercial broadcasting were banished to the margins of political discourse and, therefore, destined to fail to achieve their goals.

While Streeter (1996), Czitrom (1982), and McChesney (1993) took the perspective that the structure of broadcasting developed the way it did because of the historical social and economic structure, all of the aforementioned scholars, except Archer (1938), presented a convincing case that alternatives to the commercially supported, network-driven industry were made available for debate during and up to the adoption of the Communications Act of 1934. The Wagner-Hatfield Amendment to the act that would have required the FCC to reserve channels and reallocate frequencies to noncommercial broadcasters was defeated. However, the FCC did award channels in the experimental frequency modulation (FM) band to educators in 1938.

By 1940, 95% of all radio was network owned or affiliated. The FCC attempted to define a competitive marketplace in the public's interest (Sterling & Kittross, 1990). The FCC issued its Report of Chain Broadcasting and subsequently Chain Broadcasting Regulations in 1941 that forced the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) to divest itself of its Blue Network. The courts upheld the decision (Barnouw, 1966; Baughman, 1981; Blakely, 1979; Kahn, 1984).

The FCC made another attempt to articulate broadcasters' public service responsibilities with the *Blue Book* in 1946, but industry pressure prevented it from enforcing its provisions (Barnouw, 1966; Baughman, 1981; Kahn, 1984; Ray, 1990).

By the time the FCC was charged with regulating the growth of the television industry, public interest enforcement cases focused mainly on upholding the integrity of the spectrum. When the FCC released its Sixth Report and Order, which reserved television channels for educational broadcasters, there was hope among broadcasters that they would be able to offer public service programming on their reserved channels (Kahn, 1984).

By the late 1950s, "a critical consensus developed that television had become a social problem, had come to be widely shared by many of those contemplating the nation's problems" (Baughman, 1981, p. 54). Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (1961) published their findings from an exhaustive series of studies on the effects of television on children. Although the report was inconclusive, it left no doubt that television had some effect on the people who were viewing it. An influential contingent of the press had been joined by intellectuals and political leaders in bemoaning television's tendency to reflect the worst of American society. The public was questioning whether or not television was truly serving the public interest when Newton Minow gave his "vast wasteland" speech in May 1961. Minow (1965) and Minow and LaMay (1995) had the opinion that broadcasting's public service responsibilities were a moral issue.

In 1967, Nicholas Johnson, a sitting member of the FCC, wrote *How to Talk Back to Your Television Set*. In it, he urged the public to assume their rights to influence broadcasting by participating in the regulatory process and challenging broadcasters to live up to their public service responsibilities. That same year, Fred Friendly, former president of the Columbia Broadcasting Service (CBS) news, wrote a

book chronicling his disillusionment with broadcasting (Friendly, 1967). He explained

that he could no longer work in an industry that preempted the Senate Foreign Affairs

hearings in favor of running another rerun of a situation comedy. The book was a

bestseller.

Media Reform Movement II

As criticism of the media intensified, a growing number of citizens formed a

grassroots movement to address issues such as public participation in the regulatory

process, minority employment and representation in the media, violence and

commercialization in children's programming, and access to the media itself (Krasnow

et al., 1982). As noncommercial broadcasters struggled to create a viable system of

public broadcasting, citizens pressured broadcasters to assume their public service

obligations. Groups such as the NCCB, ACT, Accuracy in Media, American Council

for Better Broadcasts, Committee for Open Media, National Black Media Coalition,

National Organization of Women's Media Task Force, and the Office of

Communication of the United Church of Christ brought their definitions of what

public service broadcasting meant into the public discourse throughout the mid-1960s

and 1970s.

Some scholars attempted to access the progress of the media reform movement

of the 1960s and 1970s. In one analysis, Branscomb and Savage (1978) conceded that

the movement had achieved some success, but they also noted that in order for the

movement to continue to move forward it would have to move into the mainstream

and struggle to replace funding that foundations were less willing to provide.

Essentially, they argued that reformers needed to cooperate and play the game if they hoped to build on their successes. Rowland, in a monograph written in 1982, argued that any reforms that were accomplished were symbolic and ritualistic enactments that served to legitimize the structure that was already in place. McChesney (1999) reiterated this argument and noted that by the 1990s, because of the advent of the free market theology as reigning civic religion, any gains that were achieved during the 1960s and 1970s had been lost.

Mosco (1979) wrote that reformers had made sufficient gains to cause broadcasters to worry, although not enough to seriously threaten the economic base of network broadcasting. He also noted that reformers were able to establish the right for public participation in regulatory hearings, increased minority hiring, defeating efforts to extend licensing to 5 years, and eliminating comparative license renewal hearings; however, he described these gains as little more than holding actions.

Grundfest (1976) withheld judgment on the reform movement's success or failure, but he documented the history of citizen participation in licensing hearings and described agreements that were sometimes made between citizen groups and local broadcasters during that time period. Krasnow and colleagues (1982) conceded that, although citizen groups rarely succeeded in their petitions to deny, they were often able to get the FCC to articulate a new public service obligation for broadcasters in their rulings. The authors contended that this had a ripple effect in the industry. They wrote that the movement was in a decline by 1982 because of a decline in foundation funding, a drain in leadership, discouragement, and a changing political environment.

When specifically addressing the role of Nicholas Johnson, they said Johnson and the FCC were successful in involving the public to a greater degree than when he was a commissioner. They counted citizen groups as one of five entities, along with the FCC, the broadcast industry, the White House, and the courts, that determine regulatory policy.

Public Television

In 1962, the Congress passed the Educational Facilities Act that created a $32 million, 5-year program that would provide federal matching funds to construct educational stations (Witherspoon et al., 2000). For some observers, this federal commitment was seen as a first step towards directing significant media reform. After 2 years of study, in 1967, the Carnegie Commission issued *Public Television: A Program for Action*. In their report, the commission recommended that educational broadcasters expand their vision to develop the concept of *public* television, which would become a vehicle for arts, public affairs, education, and entertainment programming. The Carnegie Commission recommended that a nonprofit, nongovernmental agency be formed to administer public funds that would be collected from an excise tax levied on the sale of television sets. Other recommendations included the establishment of national production centers, exploration of new interconnection methods, and technical and artistic experimentation provided by public television. The report was a blueprint for the creation of a loosely confederated network that would give educators a real chance to define public service broadcasting.

When the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 passed, it created the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which was to be administered by a 15-member board that would allocate money to public broadcasters to be appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate (Avery & Pepper, 1976; Witherspoon et al., 2000). The funding amounted to $9 million for the CPB, plus an additional amount set aside for facilities. Going against the recommendations of the Carnegie Commission, the act did not allow for long-term funding, and it did not address the issue of interconnection. The act also did not address the structure for programming development or training, and there was no mechanism to insulate the CPB or its member stations from the political maneuverings of Congress or the executive branch. These problems would block efforts to create a viable public broadcasting service in the years to come.

Public broadcasting's identity and vision have always been as ambiguous as the public service clause in the Radio Act of 1927. Aufderheide (1991) argued that public broadcasting has never had an explicit mandate and that this has left it open to exploitation by various interest groups. She argued that if public broadcasting is to provide a compelling service, it must foster the development of the public sphere through the programming it produces. In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Calhoun (1997) said, "In a nutshell, a public sphere adequate to a democratic polity depends both on quality of discourse and quantity of participation" (p. 2). In other words, public broadcasting has the potential to be an essential element of a democratic society.

In order to realize its potential for furthering democracy, the public sphere must be outside of the control of the government, it must be open and available to all

citizens who wish to participate, it must be focused on a rational-critical discourse that occurs among private citizens, and it must be devoted to matters of public concern (Calhoun, 1997; Garnham, 1990, 1997).

It is widely acknowledged among scholars and critics that public broadcasting's lack of an independent source of funding has crippled its programming options. In 1971, Brown published a book that was highly critical of the broadcasting industry. He also had choice criticism for public broadcasters. After noting a few exceptions, he characterized most early programming as a continuation of educational programming that for the most part was bland, boring, and noticeably lacking in production values. He argued that public television was "a name without a concept and that the only thing public stations could agree on was their thirst for federal funding" (Brown, 1971, p. 391). In short, public broadcasting has been the subject of repeated criticism since its inception. Sadly none of the various proposals that have been developed to provide adequate funding for public broadcasting has ever materialized. Instead public broadcasting has been forced to rely on increased levels of commercialization in order to survive (Stavitsky, 1995). Relaxed underwriting rules have blurred the distinction between commercial messages and underwriting announcement (Day, 1995; Engelman, 1996; Hoynes, 1994; Ledbetter, 1997). Some stations have expanded their marketing efforts to include the marketing of ancillary products. Contests during fund-raisers are increasingly common, and some stations actually auction off high-priced vacations and other merchandise.

The power struggles and conflicts between the CPB and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), the independent agency conceived to be in charge of the

interconnection between member stations, are legendary (Avery & Pepper, 1976). Day

(1995), Ledbetter (1997), Hoynes (1994), Engelman (1996), and Starr (2000) argued

that public broadcasting will never be able to achieve its goals until a single

centralized governing body is created with clear lines of responsibility and authority.

The failure of public broadcasters to reach a consensus on operational procedures has

hampered its development as a genuine alternative to commercial broadcasting and an

agent for the public sphere. The issue of centralism versus localism is central to the

structural failures of the system. Independent producers argue that they cannot get

their programming on the national network because local stations have a tendency to

preempt controversial programming. PBS argues that revenues are reduced when local

stations opt out of national programming. Citizen groups complain that local issues are

not addressed in their cities. Finally, conservative politicians complain that PBS

programming fails to represent their constituencies.

When funding for public broadcasting came under serious attack from

politicians like Newt Gingrich, they argued that public broadcasting is an anachronism

in a multichannel media environment (Witherspoon et el., 2000). Scholars such as

McChesney (1999) and Bagdikian (2000) do not agree with those assessments; instead

they argue that the multichannel environment merely presents the appearance of

choice, with less than 10 multinational corporations controlling the media.

Public Radio

Educational broadcasters were slow to take advantage of their FM frequency allotments, whereas other noncommercial broadcasters envisioned an alternative to commercial radio (Avery & Pepper, 1979; Booth & Lewis, 1990; Engelman, 1996; Witherspoon et al., 2000). While educators were struggling during the postwar years, Lewis Hill envisioned a public radio network that would offer the opportunity for community members to participate in its programming (Engelman, 1996; Howley, 1999; Laser, 1999). Hill started the first Pacifica station with the goal of diversifying voices that were being heard over the airwaves, and he envisioned a station that would be supported exclusively by its listeners. Unfortunately, political infighting plagued the station and the network from its inception, but the basic model of a community owned and operated station inspired other broadcasters to experiment with the prototype Hill created.

In 1968, Stuart Cooney, an attorney involved with Pacifica, encouraged a group of media activists from around the country to file for noncommercial FM licenses (Engelman, 1996; Milam, 1975, 1986). About the same time, a veteran of the Pacifica Network, Lorenzo Milam, set up a community radio network called *Krab Nebula* in 14 different communities across the nation. The concept of community radio caught on, and these types of stations began springing up all over the country in a fashion similar to the way the current microradio movement has spread throughout the nation. The idea seemed relatively simple, a public radio station, dependent on listener support and volunteers from the community it served, would serve a diverse audience and become a forum for the exchange of ideas that were not necessarily exclusively representative of the commercial interests of a community. The licenses of

these stations were not held by a single entity; instead the license was held by a board of directors made up of people who actually lived in the communities they served. The public would actually control the station by participating in its operation and programming. The guiding principle of community radio was that radio could become an electronic public sphere dedicated to the free and open exchange of ideas. It seemed like the democratic forum that the amateur operators had envisioned might actually become a reality (Engelman, 1996; Milam, 1975).

As media activists took their visions to communities across the nation, many stations owned by universities were able to produce noncommercial, educational programming that served a cultural niche (Witherspoon et al., 2000). While educational radio was struggling to find not only its audience but sources of financial support, the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 created the CPB, a mechanism that would allow stations to apply for federal funding. Although this enabled many stations to secure minimum funding levels that would insure their survival, it also forced many stations to depend on professional programmers and managers (Engelman, 1996; Stavitsky, 1994, 1995). The CPB also provided funds to develop the National Public Radio (NPR) network. Many educational stations chose to become members or affiliates. NPR was able to provide a quality source of national programming, and its superior production values served to increase audience expectations (Bareiss, 1998; Barlow, 1988).

Although the minimum requirements to become eligible for CPB matching grants was not a problem for most university-affiliated stations or stations situated in large markets, many smaller community stations could not meet the requirements

without seeking other sources of revenue (Engelman, 1996). Eventually relaxed underwriting rules encouraged corporate sponsorships, and public radio (like public television) was forced to become increasingly focused on marketing its stations (McChesney, 1999; Stavitsky, 1995). In order to draw larger audiences, more stations became NPR affiliates, an expensive proposition that created a climate of increasing professionalism and the tendency to steer clear of controversial content.

Most critics now agree that NPR offers public affairs programming that is far superior to that offered on most commercial stations; however, NPR has become as much a part of the established media in Washington, DC, as any other network (Engelman, 1996; McChesney, 1999). Many stations that once devoted considerable resources to local public affairs programming have now substituted national programming instead. Once again, it is rare to hear a diversity of voices on many public radio stations.

The current microradio movement can be viewed from within the historical context of the earlier movement to establish community radio stations. On January 29, 1999, the FCC began to take comments for a notice of potential rule making that would allow small community groups and educational institutions to broadcast in very limited geographical ranges over low power FM signals. The FCC Web site lists 2,225 comments for public inspection (FCC, 1999, http://gullfoss.fcc.gov/cgi_ bin/ws.exe/prod/ecfs/comsrch.hts). Proponents see it as an opportunity to promote the diversity of voices that are not often heard on the radio. Community groups see it as an opportunity that would allow them to reach their constituencies and educational institutions regarding the potential of microradio as an instructional opportunity.

Commercial broadcasters and ironically NPR see it as a threat to their dominance.

Methods and Procedures

This study employed a humanist approach to the historical archives created by the NCCB from 1974 to 1978. According to Nord and Nelson (1981), humanist historians go about their tasks believing that the history they produce will provide wisdom to those who attend to it. In addition, one who subscribes to this perspective assumes that the product of the study will have a cumulative social impact on those who are exposed to it. With this perspective, the historical research becomes part of the collective memory, and the archives of the NCCB become useful for comparison with present efforts to reform the media.

This study adopted the model detailed by Smith (1982) in *The Method of History*. Smith wrote that "empirical history is merely the application of a system and rigor to the study of the past" (p. 306). Using this approach, the first step is for the researcher to gain a general understanding of the historical context of the subject being studied. Therefore, the search of the literature originated with a general interest in the field of public broadcasting and, thus, began by identifying books and articles that focused on broad reviews of broadcast history. Smith described contextual understanding as the foundation for empirical research.

Accordingly, following the initial period of immersion in historical literature, more focused investigation of previous reform efforts throughout the history of broadcasting was conducted. In the process, it was discovered that there are many references to the NCCB that referred to the organization as an example of a citizen

group that was active in the media reform movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Following Smith's (1982) model, the next step in the process of creating empirical history was to formulate research questions. First, a researcher must ask whether or not the questions that emerge have any significance. Since this is the point when the existence of archival material collected during the years when Nicholas Johnson was the chair of the NCCB became known, and since a search of the literature did not uncover any comprehensive studies of the NCCB during the time period of interest, I reached the conclusion that significant research questions could be formulated that would assist in analyzing the data.

The research model employed uses an analogy that compares historical research to detective work. According to Barzun and Graff (1977), the researcher should assume that primary and secondary sources are produced to support the goals and perspectives of the organization or person who wrote them. All sources need to be verified by another. In addition, archival material is preserved for a reason, and researchers need to be certain that they obtain an understanding of the motives of the people who created the documents. It is essential that researchers compare all available data in order to determine if a key piece of evidence has veracity.

In order to insure that the methodology used for this study was sound, I adopted Barzun and Graff's (1977) guidelines emphasizing the gathering, synthesizing, analyzing, and presenting of primary source data from relevant files and publications of the NCCB and Johnson's publications between 1974 and 1978. This study also relied on supplemental primary source data from Johnson's personal files during this period, interviews conducted with Johnson, and e-mails. This study

examined secondary source data from academic, trade, and popular press publications and biographic material published on Johnson's Web site. Therefore, a specific step-by-step plan was devised in order to assure that the above criteria were met.

Step 1

The compilation of detailed notes was derived from the study of histories and relevant historical documents listed in the references of this thesis. This list included works critical of past and current broadcast policy, analyses of broadcasting trends and developments, and general critiques of the industry.

Step 2

Written permission to examine archival documents of Nicholas Johnson's papers contained in the University of Iowa Special Collections was granted on August 16, 2000.

Step 3

Arrangements were made to interview Nicholas Johnson in Iowa City. The research in Iowa began immediately following the supervisory committee's approval of the prospectus for this study.

Step 4

In order to facilitate the gathering of information, I studied the index to

Johnson's papers. There were approximately 17 boxes of material relevant to the focus

of this study. Although it was impossible to determine the scope of all relevant

information for this study at this point of the investigation, certain boxes of data were

focused on. Boxes numbered 679, 682, 683, 685, 689, 690, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696,

698, 700, 701, 703, 710, and 712 contained the following, but were not limited to: (a)

issues of *access* and documents related to the publication of the magazine, (b) legal

pleadings and documents filed by the NCCB, (c) several folders labeled *board of*

directors, (d) 4 issues of the *Citizen's Media Directory*, (e) a folder labeled the *CCC*

Reform Movement, (f) documents related to the management and organization of the

NCCB, (g) NCCB annual reports, and (h) interviews and articles published about the

NCCB or by Nicholas Johnson during this time period. There were also several boxes

labeled correspondence that were useful to review but were not indexed. In order to

facilitate note taking, a laptop computer, a portable tape recorder, and Xerox copies of

documents were used to catalogue the data.

Step 5

The data gathered in the first four steps were evaluated for consistency and

purposes of analysis. A summary of the results of this analysis was used when writing

the thesis. The research questions also served as a guide during the writing of the

thesis.

Organization of the Thesis

There are seven chapters contained in this thesis. Chapter 1 serves as an

introduction to the study; therefore, it provides the necessary background information for the reader to understand how and why the research questions were formulated. Chapter 1 also contains a review of relevant literature, a description of the methodology used for this study, and an explanation of the limitations of this study.

Chapter 2 traces the evolution of broadcasting in America. In order to understand the social, economic, and political context of the media reform movement of the 1960s and 1970s, it is necessary to understand the historical moments when the issues addressed by the NCCB were first included in the public discourse. This chapter provides that context.

Chapter 3 offers biographical information that traces the development of Nicholas Johnson's career up until the time when he assumed leadership of the NCCB. This chapter also includes a history of the NCCB up until the time when Johnson took over leadership.

Chapter 4 describes the research undertaken by Johnson and his staff that led to a restructuring of the goals and mission of the NCCB. This chapter discusses the initial program rationale of the organization, and it also describes the first programs that were instituted by the NCCB.

Chapter 5 focuses on the development of NCCB programming. This chapter discusses the Ohio/Michigan project, the public affairs project, the ratings project, the violence index, and the fund-raising and membership-building efforts of the NCCB.

Chapter 6 discusses the evolution of previous projects and the new programs undertaken in 1977. This chapter also provides readers with a detailed discussion of

the events that led to the disintegration of the NCCB and the media reform movement

of the 1960s and 1970s.

Chapter 7 summarizes the results of this study and details my conclusions.

This chapter also includes recommendations for future research and recommendations

for those who might be interested in contemporary media reform efforts.

Limitations of the Study

There are more than 800 boxes of material contained in the main library in the

University of Iowa's Special Collections department that pertain directly to the affairs

of Nicholas Johnson. Since it has been determined that the NCCB was at its peak

during the years in which Johnson assumed a leadership position, the material

examined was confined to the specific parameters delineated in the previous section of

this chapter. It was beyond the scope of this study to attempt to provide a complete

biographical account of Nicholas Johnson's life outside of the organization. This study

was confined to the activities of the NCCB, and only provides information about other

media reform groups that were active during this time period when that information

was directly relevant to the subject at hand. This study discussed issues related to the

reform of public broadcasting only when it related directly to the broader issues

addressed by this study. This study addressed only regulatory issues and FCC findings

and rulings when the NCCB participated in the process. Consequently, this study was

limited to Johnson's activities at the NCCB when they had bearing on the strategies he

adopted at the helm of the NCCB. Although this study was narrowly construed, one of

its goals was to examine the archival material to determine if further research is

warranted. The findings of that examination are presented in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPING RHETORIC OF REFORM

There is no shortage of historians who are willing to proclaim the decisive

moments that shaped the structure of broadcasting in this country. From one point of

view, the market structure of the industry evolved the way it did because of a free

market capitalist system. Other scholars have focused on social and political

environments, and still others have subscribed to the theories of technological

determinism. All of these historians are correct in that the structure of broadcasting

evolved the way it did because of all of these components and more. Of equal

significance is the indisputable certainty that the structure of the industry evolved the

way it did because Americans and the people they entrusted to regulate an

underestimated resource never reached consensus on how to define what "the public

interest, convenience, or necessity" (Kahn, 1984, p. 40) meant nor how this infamous

catch phrase would be upheld. It is also true that the vast majority of the citizens of

this country never asserted their rights to take part in the monumental decisions that

would affect their lives well into the 21st century (Johnson, personal communication,

December 22, 2000; McChesney, 1993).

The decisions of the officials who were responsible for long-term policy

decisions were most often reactionary (Engelman, 1996; McChesney, 1993). Rather

than representing visions of future opportunities and solid plans to implement them, the history of the industry is littered with the desires of those who shouted the loudest at the particular time when it was perceived that action needed to be taken. As is often the case, those who shouted the loudest were the ones who stood to gain the most financially (Barnouw, 1966; Engelman, 1996; McChesney, 1993). The public at large was either unwilling or unable to come to a consensus that would allow them to assert their interests and instead abdicated their responsibilities to those who were willing to address the issues as they unfolded. There have been dozens of political leaders who were willing to protect what they perceived to be the public's interest, convenience, or necessity, but there were many more who were able to argue that commercial interests would be able to best represent private capital and the public's interest. The failure of the public to assert its interest may have had more influence on the evolving structure of broadcasting than any other factor (Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000).

<center>The Roots of Regulatory Policy</center>

There have been voices calling for media reform since the beginning of electronic communication (Czitrom, 1982; Engelman, 1996). When Samuel Morse developed the telegraph in 1844, the invention captured the imagination of the public, and when the Atlantic cable was completed, there was dancing in the streets. Some citizens hailed the telegraph as an invention that would be capable of cultivating a higher form of participatory democracy, one where the country would be united by instant electronic communication. Others saw it as an opportunity to privatize an

industry that would revolutionize communication. Morse himself hoped to sell his patent to the government so it could be used for public service rather than fall into the hands of those who would use it solely for financial gain (Barnouw, 1966; Czitrom, 1982). As the telegraph industry developed in the 1850s, Western Union consolidated its holdings in the industry and became the first industrial monopoly in an age of industrial consolidation (McChesney, 1993). By 1909, when American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T) acquired Western Union, reformers bemoaned the state of the medium: "Behind the various political proposals for telegraph reform lay a sense of betrayal of the telegraph's original promise to be the common carrier of public intelligence" (Czitrom, 1982, p. 12). However, even as experiments with wireless telegraphy caught the attention of the public, the conflict between the potential commercial applications of the new technology and the proposition that the ether should be available to everyone was never resolved.

After inexpensive crystal detectors became available to the public, young men all over the country began experimenting with wireless telegraphy (Archer, 1938; Douglas, 1987). The press romanticized these amateur operators. Tinkering with electronics was encouraged, and publications like *Scientific American* offered detailed instructions on how to construct and use wireless receivers in almost every issue (Boy wonder, 1907; Douglas, 1987). The airwaves were becoming crowded with transmissions during these years.

Meanwhile, educators had been experimenting with the physics and electronic properties of radio for many years. In 1909, Charles D. Herrold, a professor, and his students at the College of Engineering and Wireless in California, experimented with

the concept of regularly scheduled broadcasts (Sterling & Kittross, 1990). They set up

a transmitter in downtown San Jose and arranged for several hotels around town to set

up receivers in their lobbies so the public could listen to the broadcasts. Herrold and

his students broadcasted weekly news reports, played music, and occasionally even

had live singers during their weekly experiments. Universities in Wisconsin,

Nebraska, and North Dakota began regularly scheduled broadcasts of weather

forecasts and news and market reports around this time (Witherspoon et al., 2000). As

land grant colleges, these institutions extended the philosophy of higher education as a

community resource to the airwaves.

By 1912, there were so many amateurs on the air that the messages sent by the

U.S. Navy were being drowned out by interference (Barnouw, 1966; Sterling &

Kittross, 1990). Stations operated by amateurs were sometimes technically superior to

those operated by the government, and the U.S. Navy claimed that national security

was at risk. The Radio Act of 1912 was designed to reduce interference by amateurs,

and for the first time, all radio operators were required to have a license. The

legislation was to be enforced by the secretary of commerce. The Department of

Commerce could not deny licenses, but it could assign wavelengths and the times

when operations could proceed. The most desirable wavelengths on the spectrum were

reserved for military and commercial companies; the amateurs and educators were

assigned to whatever space was left.

Many amateur operators opposed the restrictions contained in the Radio Act of

1912 (Engelman, 1996). Led by Hiram Percy Maxim, they banded together to form a

national organization called the American Radio Relay League. On George

Washington's birthday in 1916, the league demonstrated that it could organize a

national relay network, generating much publicity in the press. By 1920, there were

close to 250,000 amateurs monitoring 15,000 amateur stations. The amateurs and the

American Radio Relay League were quite successful in raising the level of public

discourse to include the issue of public access to the airwaves. In the early years of

radio, amateurs experimenting with two-way wireless communication believed

strongly that this new invention would contribute to the public interest, and there was

no shortage of utopian visionaries who were willing to exploit this new opportunity

(Douglas, 1987). As wireless telegraphy became radio, educators, amateurs, and

policymakers envisioned it as a tool for realizing democratic ideals and educating the

public (Engelman, 1996; McChesney, 1993, 1999; Witherspoon et al., 2000). The idea

of a public united by mass communication seemed to some to have the potential to

create a forum for open exchange of voices engaged in rational political discourse.

World War I

When the United States entered the fighting in 1917, the navy seized control of

all radio stations (Barnouw, 1966; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). During the war, the

navy, aided by civilians who had experimented with radio as amateurs, developed

technological innovations that would fuel a radio boom after the war. At the same

time, there were some legislators who believed that it had been a mistake to allow

private companies to gain a monopoly over the telegraph and telephone industries.

When the war ended, the military argued that it should retain control of the airwaves,

and a bill was introduced in Congress that would allow the government to compete

with private commercial interests in the acquisition of radio stations. The Alexander

Bill allowed for a potential government-controlled network of stations. The bill was

supported by the American Radio Relay League and the secretary of the navy

(Engelman, 1996; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). If the bill passed, the proposition that the

government should reserve part of the radio spectrum for noncommercial public use

would have established a precedent of publicly supported broadcasting in this country.

The Marconi Company and AT&T were opposed to the Alexander Bill and pressured

Congress to kill it, which they did in 1918, thereby continuing the precedent set with

the control of the telegraph.

Still, some in government were leery of creating a situation in which the

foreign-owned Marconi Company could gain a monopoly on the emerging business of

radio (Sterling & Kittross, 1990). In 1919, General Electric (GE) bought Marconi's

American subsidiary and formed the Radio Corporation of America (RCA). The

government sanctioned the sale and agreed that RCA would be the *chosen instrument*

of the government in meeting America's overseas communication needs (Sterling &

Kittross, 1990). At this point, GE, Westinghouse, and AT&T still held competing

patents that hindered the growth of the industry. Meanwhile the government returned

station licenses to their owners in 1920, and a boom was on. By 1920, there were 15

times as many amateur stations on the air as all others combined (Engelman, 1996).

By 1923, there were 70 licensed educational stations.

At this point, no one believed that programming would earn revenue

(Engelman, 1996; Sterling & Kittross, 1990; Witherspoon et al., 2000). Educational

and other noncommercial stations were broadcasting as a public service. Amateurs

were operating stations for the thrill of it, and commercial stations were operating because of the public relations value of their broadcasts. GE, Westinghouse, and AT&T began experimenting with broadcasting because it was believed that it would create an incentive for the public to buy radios. They experimented with toll broadcasting and envisioned a network of stations linked by telephone lines.

By 1922, GE, AT&T, and Westinghouse agreed to pool their patents and formed RCA to administer them (Sterling & Kittross, 1990). GE and Westinghouse agreed to manufacture radio sets and supply them to RCA. RCA would sell GE and Westinghouse receivers and would continue its international business. AT&T could sell radio receivers and lease its lines for radio telephony. The government sanctioned this agreement, which effectively created an environment that encouraged American corporate control of the airwaves.

The problem of how to pay for programming was common to all station operators (Barnouw, 1966; Sterling & Kittross, 1990; Witherspoon et al., 2000). Since most stations were operated as hobbies or as ancillary services to other businesses or educational institutions, they had constant funding deficits. In an effort to solve this problem and to find a way to finance programming, RCA President David Sarnoff proposed that a nonprofit company be financed with a 2% tax on the sale of radio receivers, but he was never able to gain support for this idea. That same year, AT&T established WEAF in New York City. The plan was to set up a network of stations that would be linked by telephone cables, and then AT&T would lease the service to individual buyers who would produce programming for the purpose of advertising their products. This plan was unsuccessful, so WEAF began to produce programming

itself and paid advertising agencies a commission if they were able to find sponsors for the programs. Although this strategy was profitable for WEAF, it was controversial. There were large segments of the public that believed that the public airwaves should not be exploited for private gain, and they resented the commercialization of the medium (McChesney, 1993).

<div align="center">The Radio Act of 1927</div>

Despite these problems, by the time Secretary of Commerce Hoover convened the first Washington radio conference in 1922, there were so many stations on the air that listening to the radio often meant listening to a cacophony of interference (Barnouw, 1966; Sterling & Kittross, 1990; Witherspoon et al., 2000). There was a growing recognition that some regulation would be necessary. Hoover favored the concept of allowing private ownership of the public's resource. He allowed broadcasters to sell their assigned channels along with the material property owned by the station.

In 1923, Hoover instituted three levels of radio broadcasting service (Sterling & Kittross, 1990). Clear-channel stations had the right to broadcast at a maximum level of power that could reach across wide geographical terrain, regional stations could broadcast their signal with lower power, and local stations could only broadcast on weak signals during the daylight hours. WEAF successfully argued that since it was able to serve a general audience, rather than the specialized one that educators and other noncommercial broadcasters targeted, it should be allowed to reach the largest possible audience with a clear-channel signal. When WEAF was granted clear-channel

status, it not only insured that commercial interests would be allowed to dominate the airwaves, but it also established the programming principle of appealing to the lowest common denominator (Engelman, 1996).

AT&T founded a second station in Washington, DC, and connected it to WEAF by cable, thereby instituting the first step towards networking distant stations with common programming (Barnouw, 1966; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). RCA, GE, and Westinghouse soon followed suit and began to sell airtime as well. AT&T considered this a violation of their agreement. This conflict had to be resolved by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). This time the government took the position that if it upheld the agreement in favor of AT&T it would be effectively creating a monopoly on network broadcasting. The FTC brokered a new plan that required AT&T to sell both of its stations but allowed it to collect revenue from the other stations through the leasing of its cables to connect GE, RCA, and Westinghouse owned stations. The plan created the National Broadcast Company (NBC). A year later, CBS was formed, and sponsors were more than willing to pay the networks to reach wider and wider audiences.

Educational Stations

Hoover's attempts to regulate the growing industry between 1922 and 1926 were invalidated by the courts on the grounds that he had exceeded his authority as secretary of commerce (Witherspoon et al., 2000). By 1927, the "industry was now hopelessly out of control and begged for legislation to relieve the chaos that threatened to destroy this young but potentially powerful medium" (Witherspoon et al., 2000, p.

4).

The industry had good reason to beg for regulation that would formalize the legitimacy of a commercially based, network driven system of broadcasting. If the government was charged with reducing interference on the spectrum, the networks could continue to develop their holdings without fear of interference from competitors. The Radio Act of 1927 established a temporary Federal Radio Commission (FRC) that had the authority that the secretary of commerce lacked. However, before the Radio Act of 1927 had even passed, the principle that private entities could own frequencies in the public trust had already been established. The precedent for selling time over the air had already been initiated, and the legitimacy of reaching mass audiences through networked stations had already been set. The FRC allocated licenses and reduced the number of stations (Engelman, 1996; McChesney, 1993). Congress renewed the authority of the FRC for 1 year in 1928 and then again permanently in 1929. The FRC was charged with regulating broadcasting in the name of the *public interest, convenience, or necessity*.

According to Mander (1984), the regulatory rationale for broadcasting that developed throughout the hearings that led up to the Radio Act of 1927 was dominated by one or all of three previous models used to structure other industries. In the process, an environment was created where the precedents set by industrial capitalism could be applied to the growth of the broadcast industry. The transportation model that assumed that Hoover would position himself as a traffic cop of the airways was one model that regulators used. Another model compared broadcasting to public utilities and, therefore, allowed for monopolies to form in order to best serve the public interest.

Finally, the newspaper model allowed for private ownership of information and

programming that was vital to the public's interest. Mander (1984) said that

> the habits of industrial capitalism, a form of government in which
> commerce takes precedent [*sic*] over the social well-being of the
> community, made it unavoidable that economics determine the future
> use and social development of broadcasting in the United States. (p.
> 185)

There was little discussion of broad policy issues when the FRC was

deliberating on how to unscramble the confusion that penetrated the airwaves

(McChesney, 1993). The FRC was a stop-gap emergency solution to a pressing

problem that needed immediate resolution. The structural components of the

commercial model of broadcasting were not considered; instead the discussions

leading up to General Order 40 were argued on technical merits. When the FRC was

deliberating on the matter of how to assign channels, it solicited input from the

National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) but not groups representing educational

interests or other noncommercial broadcasters. The public at large was not consulted.

Participation at the conferences was largely limited to industry representatives and

engineers who also were affiliated with commercial interests. The engineers advising

the FRC were appointed by the chief engineer for AT&T. Unfortunately, the precedent

established a symbiotic relationship between the regulators and those who do the

regulating that has never been abridged.

The FRC announced a reassignment plan in 1928 (Engelman, 1996;

McChesney, 1993). There would be 40 clear-channel station allotments, 34 regional

channels, and 30 low-power, local stations assigned to each region. The FRC used a

questionable rationalization for General Order 40 when it stated that the stations with

the most resources, capital, and technically advanced equipment would best be able to serve the largest part of the public simply because they possessed those very resources. All but 3 of the 40 clear-channel stations were owned by, or affiliated with, NBC or CBS (Engelman, 1996).

The FRC also held that stations would be subject to renewal hearings every 3 months and that they would force competing stations to share a frequency, thereby ensuring that one or both stations would not be able to gain the audience required to make them financially sustainable (Engelman, 1996; McChesney, 1993). One hundred stations were eliminated in this manner. According to McChesney (1993, 1999), when the aftermath of the Radio Act of 1927 became evident, it was clear to all concerned that the commercial model of broadcasting would dominate the ether and that this model would be unable to accommodate the goals of educators, community groups, or social movements. According to Aufderheide (1999), "The unarticulated assumption underlying the regulation of broadcasting from its inception was that the ether was a virtual public culture" (p. 226). It was also clear by the end of the 1920s that if there were people who were opposed to allowing the public culture to be fully dominated by corporate control those people needed to step to the forefront of the debate.

Broadcast Reform Movement From 1928 to 1934

By the late 1920s, organizations began to form that would represent a wide array of citizens who were growing increasingly alarmed at how the market structure of broadcasting was developing (Barnouw, 1966; McChesney, 1993; Witherspoon et al., 2000). Agricultural interests, educators, churches and religious leaders, labor, civil

libertarians, intellectuals, and everyday citizens whose needs were not being met by the commercial system formed a brief coalition of voices calling for reform of the structural foundations of broadcasting. Representatives from the educational broadcasting community created an organization to help them find a way to fulfill the promise of educational radio. The Association of College and University Broadcasting Stations (ACUBS) first met during the fourth Washington Radio Conference in 1925 and held its first annual convention in 1930. During that convention, the ACUBS formed an agenda with three goals. First, the ACUBS advocated setting aside a portion of the spectrum for educational use. Second, the ACUBS wanted to establish national headquarters in Washington, DC, so they could establish a strong presence in the capitol, and they also wanted to create an opportunity for the exchange and development of programming for their member stations. After the convention, ACUBS petitioned the FRC for the reservation of channels for educational broadcasters. The FRC stated that it did not have the regulatory power to do this and instead directed them to seek congressional action.

The National Committee on Education by Radio (NCER) was formed to represent the interests of many organizations such as the National Education Association, the National Catholic Education Association, and the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities (McChesney, 1993; Witherspoon et al., 2000). The Payne Fund provided funds for the organization to conduct research, publish bulletins, and form a lobbying group. A sense of midwestern populism flavored the rhetoric of NCER's leaders, and the group had a decidedly antitrust-antimonopoly perspective. The NCER asserted that educational broadcasting could strengthen an

informed citizenship and that it could also offer individuals a tool in their quest for

self-improvement. The NCER said radio had enormous potential in this regard, taking

a stand and issuing strong critiques of the commercial system. The NCER supported

the allocation of reserved channels for a separate noncommercial broadcasting system.

The Chicago Federation of Labor (CFL) operated a station that was designed

to be an alternative to the predominant commercial model (although they sold

commercials). Edward Nockels, secretary of the CFL, understood that "whoever

controls radio broadcasting in the future will eventually control the nation"

(McChesney, 1993, p. 16). He believed that organizing a national labor network

should be a primary goal for labor leaders. Nockels framed the issue of diversifying

broadcasting as an issue of free speech. He criticized commercial broadcasters for not

airing controversial issues or critiques of the social order, and he believed the system

was structured in a way that would preserve the existing social order by marginalizing

labor. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) joined the reform movement, and

together with labor and the NCER called for an independent government study to be

convened to rethink the structure of broadcasting (McChesney, 1993).

Although these organizations shared a common goal of creating an alternative

to the structure of the commercial broadcasting system, there were several other

approaches to the problem (McChesney, 1993). One plan called for the government to

set up a national network of noncommercial stations. Another plan asked the

government to set aside a certain number of channels for noncommercial use without

offering a fiscal solution that would pay for programming. There was also a strong

contingent of reformers who believed that it was best to operate from within the

system. One representative of this proposal for educational broadcasting was the National Advisory Council on Radio and Education (NACRE). The NACRE advocated for increased collaboration between educational broadcasters and the networks. Its director, Levering Tyson, believed that most educational programs were boring and deserved the limited audiences they received. Tyson believed that educational broadcasters needed to work from within the free enterprise system guided by strong business principles. The separatist versus cooperation issue polarized the reform movement and prevented its leaders from speaking with a unified voice. This problem has been pervasive throughout the history of broadcasting in the United States.

It is not surprising that the FRC and commercial broadcasters favored the position taken by the NACRE (Engelman, 1996; McChesney, 1993). Suddenly broadcasters offered unsold time for educational programs. By this time the FRC had already established a record that consistently upheld the interests of commercial broadcasters. The rhetoric of cooperation held more appeal to the regulatory agency than a radical reformation of the structure of broadcasting did. Still, in 1931, the NCER managed to get Senator Fess to introduce a bill that would set aside 15% of all channels for noncommercial educational use. Despite popular and congressional support, the bill died in committee due to the lobbying efforts of commercial broadcasters.

The ushering in of New Deal legislation provided more hope for reformers (McChesney, 1993). Roosevelt proposed legislation that would consolidate the responsibility for the regulation of telephone, telegraph, and radio under a new agency

called the FCC. When this bill came up for debate, reformers gathered in Washington, DC, to testify. However, if there was ever a time when reformers were united, this was not one of them. The CFL argued for an allocation of 25% of all channels that they would support through advertising revenues. The NCER was vehemently opposed to any type of commercially supported network and wanted a direct system of public support for educational broadcasters. The NACRE continued to urge more cooperation with commercial broadcasters. To further complicate the situation, during the time of the hearings, educators in collaboration with the networks produced some fine public service programs. In contrast to the confusing array of choices that reformers presented, the commercial broadcasters proclaimed that they were willing to provide more airtime for educators and foresaw a future when cooperation would provide mass audiences with meaningful educational programming.

The Wagner-Hatfield amendment to the Communications Act was introduced at the same time that hearings were taking place (McChesney, 1993). This bill would have voided all licenses 90 days after its passage. The bill then would have established that 25% of the most desirable frequencies be handed over to noncommercial broadcasters, and it allowed nonprofit broadcasters to sell off some of their airtime so they could obtain the necessary funding for their own programs. NCER was able to gather 60,000 signatures in support of the bill. Many believed the bill had a strong chance of passing until the NAB, then as now one of the most powerful lobbying groups in Congress, went on the attack. They seized on the opportunity to exploit the provision that allowed nonprofit groups to sell a portion of their airtime. They reiterated their offer to cooperate with educators. The Wagner-Hatfield Amendment

was defeated.

The reform movement had been far from united in its proposals for an equitable solution to the problem and suffered from factionalism (McChesney, 1993; Witherspoon et al., 2000). The Communication Act of 1934 passed without any provisions for reform other than the consolidation of regulatory agencies. Noncommercial broadcasters failed to gather the support they needed to enact any meaningful reform of the system, but the vision of a broadcasting system that would function as a democratic medium in a society increasingly devoted to the consumption of commercial products remained.

After the Communications Act of 1934 passed, it effectively banished noncommercial radio to the margins of the spectrum. Universities, labor unions, and community groups who wished to broadcast over the air were forced to broadcast during hours that were not financially viable or were on very low power signals. Therefore, the potential audience for their programming was very limited (Avery & Pepper, 1979; Engelman, 1996; McChesney, 1993). Noncommercial broadcasters had difficulty generating the financial support they needed to stay afloat; consequently the concept of public radio nearly disappeared (Engelman, 1996).

By 1935, broadcasters rescinded their promise to educators, who were effectively excluded from influencing network programming (McChesney, 1993). In 1938, the FCC reserved several channels in the experimental FM band for educational broadcasters, but the problem of funding was never resolved. FM was slow to gain acceptance, manufacturers did not make radios capable of receiving FM for many years, and it would take decades for noncommercial broadcasters to regain the ground

they had lost during the 1920s. Engelman (1996) described this turn of events as fortuitous for public radio. Because commercial broadcasters rejected FM as being commercially inviable, educators held out hope that they could develop FM stations that would eventually be able to serve a wider public interest than commercial broadcasters were willing to serve. Many years later, noncommercial broadcasters paved the way for stereo broadcasting and proved that it could draw an audience. Ironically if FM was perceived as being commercially feasible in the 1930s, public radio probably might have died out altogether (Aufderheide, 1999).

When discussing the reasons why the media reform movement of the 1930s failed, McChesney (1993) maintained that one reason for the failure of the reform movement was that U.S. political culture does not permit any discussion of fundamental weaknesses in capitalism; therefore, any alternatives to a commercially supported system dominated by corporations would have been equally off-limits and doomed to failure. He offered other explanations for the failure of the movement as well. McChesney asserted that the reformers were drowned out by an industry that had many more resources to work with than they did. He was of the opinion that the reformers were politically incompetent and that their inability to present a united front when challenging the legitimacy of an established industry weakened any chance they may have had to alter the existing structure of broadcasting. Another contributing factor was the absence of a viable left-leaning political force that may have been able to rally support for reform proposals.

In his analysis, McChesney (1993) also pointed out that many in the reform movement had elitist tendencies that alienated some members of the public who could

have supported their agenda. Coupled with the successful effort of commercial broadcasters who were able to present the case that the status quo was the only rational choice in a freedom-loving America, the public remained largely ambiguous on the issue. Although McChesney (1993) characterized the reform movement of the 1930s as a failure, the FCC did reserve *curricular channels* in the experimental FM band for educational broadcasters. Eventually, in 1945, the FCC moved FM service to the very high frequency (VHF) band. While this movement resulted in the obsolescence of most existing FM transmitters and receivers, the FCC did increase the number of channels that were permanently reserved for noncommercial broadcasters (Baughman, 1981; Sterling & Kittross, 1990; Witherspoon et al., 2000).

<div align="center">The World War II Years</div>

By 1940, 95% of all radio was network owned or affiliated (Barnouw, 1968; Baughman, 1981; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). Many members of Congress and some in the broadcast industry itself believed that the FCC had not done enough to break the monopolistic tendencies of the networks (McChesney, 1993). The FTC and the FCC, after a protracted court battle, forced NBC to sell off its Blue Network, rationalizing that increased competition in broadcasting would serve the public interest (Barnouw, 1968; Kahn, 1984; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). Chain-broadcasting rules were implemented in 1941 that restricted the contracts between networks and affiliates and gave contractual power to individual stations. The Blue Network became the American Broadcasting Company (ABC).

While radio was developing into a mass medium of entertainment and mass

consumption, scientists were experimenting with ways to perfect television broadcasting (Barnouw, 1968; Baughman, 1981; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). In many ways, the development of television paralleled that of radio, and the structure of radio was extended to include the new medium. The concept of television began with inventors who toiled away independently to develop the potential of their experiments. Eventually patents were sold to the same corporations that gained control of radio. Competing systems were developed, and as early as 1939, RCA demonstrated a rudimentary form of television at the New York World's Fair. As with the telegraph and radio before it, the public was enthralled by the potential that the new medium offered.

During World War II, the expansion efforts of the television broadcasting industry were stuck in a holding pattern (Barnouw, 1968; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). There were numerous technical problems to be solved, and the situation was complicated by the war effort. The FCC allowed a few stations to operate experimentally throughout the war years. NBC and CBS began broadcasting from their stations in New York for about 15 hours a week. The programming content reflected the content of radio broadcasts. All new construction permits for radio and television were suspended during the war. Due to the flood of applications it received after the war was over, and due to technical problems, in 1948, the FCC put a freeze on all television station applications and considered how to divide the spectrum (Barnouw, 1968; Baughman, 1981; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). The freeze lasted 4 years while the FCC studied the issues, but it did not preclude existing stations from broadcasting nor did it block existing station construction permits.

In the midst of trying to untangle the complicated technical requirements of television, the FCC decided to codify broadcasters' public service responsibilities and published a reiteration of the regulatory position of the agency with regard to programming called the *Public Service Responsibility of Broadcast Licensees* (Baughman, 1981; Friendly, 1967; Kahn, 1968). Popularly known as the *Blue Book*, the document stated that the FCC would favor license renewals in comparative hearings for stations that took their public service responsibilities seriously. The FCC stated that stations needed to run locally produced programs, news, and programming featuring the discussion of local issues without regard to cost.

The *Blue Book* stated that broadcasters needed to provide live public service programs, that there was a limit to how many commercials stations could run, and that stations had an obligation to provide programs whose nature would make them unsponsorable. The *Blue Book* also said broadcasters had an obligation to provide programming that would meet the needs of minority tastes and interests and the needs of nonprofit organizations (Baughman, 1981; Kahn, 1968). The FCC went even further and asked broadcasters to air experimental programming. Finally, the FCC stated that it would assert its legal authority to insure that broadcasters meet these standards when license renewal and comparative hearings occurred. This attempt to codify the public interest clause of the Radio Act of 1927 was not well received.

Commercial broadcasters immediately denounced the *Blue Book* on the basis that its pronouncements were an attempt to limit First Amendment rights (Barnouw, 1968; Baughman, 1981; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). The FCC was never able to enforce the provisions contained in the *Blue Book*. Nonetheless, the *Blue Book*

represented an effort to address some of the concerns that educators and other activists

had brought up in the 1930s. The definition of public service broadcasting has always

been elastic, ambiguous, and unenforceable, but it also has always been present in the

subtext that informs broadcast regulatory policy (Aufderheide, 1999; Douglas, 1987).

Despite the fact that the FCC never took its own recommendations seriously when

holding comparative hearings, the *Blue Book* represented an attempt to address some

of the same issues that reformers had raised earlier (Baughman, 1981).

Television

Although commissioners were fully aware that the existing VHF band would

not be able to provide enough channels for future television and fixed and mobile

service needs, when it lifted the freeze in 1952, the FCC approved 13 VHF channels

for television. Once again educators expressed their visions of a broadcasting system

that would function as a democratic medium in society and provide its viewers with

educational programming. They urged the FCC to reserve space for educational

television. The NAEB formed the Joint Committee on Educational Television and was

able to enlist the financial support of the Ford Foundation in its lobbying and planning

efforts. This time educators were more successful in their lobbying efforts, and the

FCC took note of their arguments (Engelman, 1996; Witherspoon et al., 2000). When

the FCC lifted its freeze in 1952, it announced that it had reserved 242 local television

channels (out of 2,053) for noncommercial educational television. The *Sixth Report*

and Order also approved licenses for several experimental ultra high frequency (UHF) television stations. Now there were 162 UHF channels and 80 VHF channels set aside for noncommercial educational use in the table of channel allocations.

<u>The Postwar Years</u>

While educators were concentrating on devising a plan for the channels allotted to them, commercial broadcasters concentrated on building television stations and producing programming (Engelman, 1996; Sterling & Kittross, 1990; Witherspoon et al., 2000). At first television stations were so capital intensive and programming was so expensive to produce that it was doubtful if advertising could support it. The networks took the profits they earned from radio and poured them into their new television ventures. While the networks went about consolidating their holdings in the new television market, their influence on radio began to decline. Advertisers began to purchase time from local stations that began to feature disc jockeys as personalities; thus, radio became a more local medium. In the wake of television investments, the development of FM stalled, with most stations simulcasting on their FM stations. In 1949, the 50th educational radio station signed on to the air, but during this period, most broadcasters focused on the growth of the television industry.

In the early 1950s, the public rushed to buy television sets. The networks signed local television affiliates, and soon they were providing the bulk of programming during the evening hours. As audiences grew, advertisers were attracted to the new medium. Larger companies purchased sponsorships of entire programs. At

first the programming replicated programming that had been offered on network radio. Soon, however, performers and playwrights were anxious to experiment on television, and the networks began producing their own shows.

A portion of the programming produced during the 1950s was innovative and exciting (Barnouw, 1968; Friendly, 1967; Minow, 1965). At the beginning of the decade, most shows were live and spontaneous. The shows were high-quality anthology drama series, with the networks producing special programming frequently. One such *spectacular*, the *Peter Pan Show*, was viewed by 70 million Americans (Sterling & Kittross, 1990). The networks also produced 15-minute newscasts and news documentaries. By the end of the decade, all network programming was broadcast in color.

The 1950s also produced programs that would become staples for several decades (Barnouw, 1970; Baughman, 1981; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). Adult westerns, soap operas, situation comedies, and comedy and variety shows were popular. Many of these shows were produced by independent production companies and sold to the networks. Alfred Hitchcock offered suspense, and there was a plethora of crime shows on the air that were largely dependent on the use of violence as a dramatic device. There were endless cartoons for children and slap-stick comedy fare like *The Three Stooges*. Political programming was exemplified by campaign coverage and congressional hearings (Friendly, 1967). In 1955, CBS aired the *$64,000 Question*, and the quiz shows gained big audiences.

By the middle of the decade, the network's increasing emphasis on programming for the largest possible mass audience meant that the drama anthologies

and news documentaries, which had never attracted large audiences, soon disappeared

from the air (Baughman, 1981; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). Government officials,

educators, and parents were increasingly alarmed by the amount of violence that their

children were watching on the screen. Some urged the FCC to do something. Others

believed that the industry should do more to police itself. Studies were undertaken, but

they failed to show a definitive cause- and-effect relationship between television

viewing and behavior (Schramm et al., 1961). When the public discovered that the

quiz shows were rigged, Congress held hearings, and television came under increased

scrutiny. The commercialization of all programming was incessant. The networks

promised to put more news on the air.

As the economic conditions improved for most Americans during the 1950s,

people had more leisure time, and they began spending it in front of their television

sets. By 1960, there were 515 commercial television stations on the air (Sterling &

Kittross, 1990). By 1960, 90% of all American households owned at least one

television set. Adults and children alike were spending hours each day watching

television, and many Americans got their news primarily through television. However,

the novelty of television had begun to wear thin by the beginning of the 1960s

(Baughman, 1981; Johnson, 1967; Minow, 1965).

During the 1950s, there was a series of scandals involving members of the

FCC (Baughman, 1981). The always close relationship between the regulatory agency

and the industry it regulated led to a series of corruption charges and resignations. As

the communication industry grew, it became more diversified and complicated, and

the FCC was increasingly seen as ineffectual and bureaucratic. The FCC's attempts to

define the public's interest with regard to television programming had failed, and the regulatory agency was seen as a nuisance by the industry. The FCC had no real power to formulate or enforce policy, and its decision gained little attention in the press. Still, citizens were disgusted by the revelation that the quiz shows were rigged and worried about the effect of violence and the crass commercialization of the medium. By the late 1950s, "critical consensus developed that television had become a social problem, had come to be widely shared by many of those contemplating the nation's problems" (Baughman, 1981, p. 54). Between 1958 and 1960 television was under attack. An influential contingent of the press had been joined by intellectuals and political leaders in bemoaning television's tendency to reflect the worst of American society.

The criticism stemmed from several developments. There was a sense that television programming had entered a steep decline since the early golden years of the 1950s (Minow, 1965; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). Another concern stemmed from the negative role of advertising on television and in the larger society. If anyone doubted that television had become a powerful force in society, the Nixon-Kennedy debate cemented that impression. Millions watched as a youthful and confident Kennedy debated a tired and scruffy Nixon. Image became a driving force in the political process (Johnson, 1967). After Kennedy was elected, there was a sense that there would be a change in the status quo. When Newton Minow was nominated to chair the FCC, he breezed through the hearings without any problems. When he made his "vast wasteland" speech in front of the NAB a few months after his appointment, he challenged the status quo and captured the attention of both the industry and the public. With an activist agenda and a strong stage presence, Minow attempted to

create a proactive FCC that was mired in bureaucratic inertia (Baughman, 1981).

Minow (1965) believed that television had the potential to elevate viewers, and he also believed that the industry was squandering that potential. He also believed that increased competition would help the situation and vowed to review license renewals with a watchful eye for balance and public service responsibilities.

> I understand that many people feel that in the past licenses were often reviewed pro forma. I say to you now: Renewal will not be pro forma in the future. There is nothing permanent or sacred about a broadcast license. (Minow, 1965, p. 170)

In short, Minow cast himself as a consumer advocate (Baughman, 1981). What Minow did not count on was the extent to which bureaucratic inertia had taken hold of the FCC. He was unable to gather the political support from his fellow commissioners and was blocked from accomplishing most of what he set out to do.

Before Minnow resigned in frustration 2 years later, he set about to rectify one problem that had plagued the industry for years (Baughman, 1981; Engelman, 1996; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). When the FCC originally assigned channel allocations to broadcasters, it had assigned UHF frequencies to educational broadcasters and others. The problem with this was that UHF channels were inferior to VHF. The coverage required much higher power, and the signal was subject to greater interference. Given that most television sets were manufactured without the ability to receive UHF transmissions, stations on the UHF frequency band were floundering. Minow pushed for the All Channels Receivers Act that required all television sets to be manufactured with the ability to receive UHF signals. The assumption was that as more people

replaced their sets, the audience for UHF would increase exponentially.

At the same time Minow was struggling to enact policies that would reform commercial broadcasting, educators were having more luck. For many years, most educational broadcasters had difficulty generating the financial support they needed to experiment with their FM allotments (Witherspoon et al., 2000). Consequently, the concept of educational broadcasting nearly disappeared until 1962 when Congress passed the Educational Facilities Act that created a $32 million, 5-year program that would provide federal matching funds to construct educational television stations. In 1963, the NAEB created a new educational television services division to establish new stations, train personnel, and figure out a way to secure long-term funding for their efforts.

By 1964, there were 124 educational television stations on the air (Sterling & Kittross, 1990). The NAEB held national conferences on long-range financing that led to the establishment of the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, a blue-ribbon committee that was mandated to make recommendations to educators and Congress on how to develop a viable educational alternative to the commercial broadcasting system (Carnegie Commission, 1979). Educators hoped to realize the concept of public service broadcasting within an alternative system supported by public funding. Commercial broadcasters were willing to support this effort because they believed it would liberate them from their public service responsibilities (Barnouw, 1970; Engelman, 1996).

The Carnegie Commission, funded by the Carnegie Corporation—a philanthropic organization with a long history of educational and broadcasting policy

making, issued *Public Television: A Program for Action* in 1967 after 2 years of study. In it, the commission recommended that educational broadcasters expand their vision to envelop the concept of public television that would become a vehicle for arts, public affairs, education, and entertainment programming. The commission recommended that a nonprofit, nongovernmental agency be formed to administer public funds that would be collected from an excise tax levied on the sale of television sets. Other recommendations included the establishment of national production centers, exploration of new interconnection methods, and principle that public television should be devoted to technical and artistic experimentation.

The Carnegie Corporation report formed the basis of the bill that would come before the Congress (Engelman, 1996; Sterling & Kittross, 1990; Witherspoon et al., 2000). President Lyndon B. Johnson recommended that the bill be passed without the provision for the excise tax on television sets. Instead he would provide funding through congressional appropriation. There was also a concern that a network of publicly funded stations remain scrupulously balanced and devoid of any type of political advocacy. Another key issue was the method of appointment to the independent corporation that would administer funding for public broadcasting. It was decided at the last minute that the bill also should be expanded to encompass provisions for a national public radio network.

When the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 passed, for the first time educators and other concerned citizens were optimistic that they would finally have a real chance to establish an alternative to commercial broadcasting, one that would be able to ultimately define the public service provision of the Radio Act of 1927 (Day, 1995;

Witherspoon et al., 2000). The CPB, a private nonprofit corporation, would administer

the appropriated funds to its member stations. The funding amounted to $9 million for

the CPB plus an additional amount set aside for facilities. The law did not allow for

long-term funding nor did it address the issue of interconnection; also absent was

consideration of the structure for programming development or system training. There

was no mechanism to insulate the corporation or its member stations from the political

maneuverings of the Congress or the executive branch. The law did not clearly address

the conflict between centralization and localism (Kahn, 1984). These problems would

inhibit the growth and quality of public broadcasting for years to come and, in fact,

have never been fully resolved (Hoynes, 1994; Starr, 2000).

The Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 did, however, give reformers and

educators confidence that the failings of commercial broadcasting could be corrected

by the provision of an alternative noncommercial system (Witherspoon et al., 2000).

While system advocates were pouring their energies into creating a national network

of radio and television stations, some of the original members of the Carnegie

Commission formed a new group designed to encourage the public to support its

goals. The group would be called the NCCPTV. It would eventually change its name

to the NCCB and would be headed by ex-FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson.

Although many people subscribe to the belief that leaders are born, not made,

Johnson's life experiences prepared him well for the leadership position he would

eventually assume. In order to understand how Johnson became the premier

spokesman of the media reform movement of the 1960s and 1970s, it is necessary to

understand his background. Chapter 3 offers biographical information that outlines the

development of Johnson's career up until the time when he assumed the leadership of

the NCCB. This chapter also includes a history of the NCCB up until the time when

Johnson took over.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REFORMER

Born in Iowa City, Iowa, in 1934, Johnson would become an advocate for

citizen participation during his term as an FCC commissioner. After completing his

term, Johnson served as the chairman for the NCCB, an organization dedicated to

media reform. Johnson became the spokesman for a generation of media activists who

were committed to improving the status of broadcasting in America.

Nicholas Johnson's background prepared him well for a life in public service

(Junker, 1971). He said that as a young man "his orientation from the time he was a

teenager was towards public service of various kinds," and his education cultivated

this orientation (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 21, 2000). He said

he remembers reading Lincoln Steffan's biography, one of the early muckrakers, as a

young man and that it really made a big impression on him. Johnson described his

upbringing as one that was founded on a "sense of humanism and moral values and the

Protestant ethic of hard work and responsibility and the Kennedy ethic of 'from whom

much has been given, much is expected'" (Junker, 1971, p. 36).

Johnson was born in a hospital on the grounds of the University of Iowa. When

he was 2 years old, his parents enrolled him in the university's experimental

preschool, the Iowa Child Welfare Research Clinic (Johnson, 2001a). Johnson's

father, Wendell Johnson, for whom the University of Iowa dedicated the Wendell

Johnson Speech and Hearing Clinic, was a pioneer in the field of speech pathology

and general semantics. His mother, Edna, was an accomplished poet and dancer.

Johnson describes his home as one that was often filled with lively discussions with

his father's students and colleagues. Wendell Johnson was a founding member of the

academic study of general semantics, which became a popular movement during the

1940s and 1950s. People traveled from all over the country to visit him in his home

(Johnson, 2001b). Johnson stayed in the university's experimental schools and

eventually graduated from the University High School.

Johnson was a high achiever who was not afraid to speak out at an early age

(Junker, 1971). When he was in fourth grade, he staged a sit-in to demand that

students be allowed to form a student council. He was elected to the student council as

a junior in high school, was president of the Letterman Club, the National Hi-Y, and

the YMCA youth organization (Johnson, 2001a). His debate team won the state

championship for 3 years in a row. Johnson also assumed a position of leadership at

the National Association of Student Councils Convention and the International Young

Men's Christian Association Convention. He appeared in court for the first time when

he was in seventh grade and argued that a friend's parking ticket did not conform to

the rules listed in the municipal code. The ticket was thrown out. While still in high

school, the Iowa Bar Association honored him with its Citizenship Award.

Johnson went to Austin and earned his bachelor of arts degree from the

University of Texas in 3 years and went on to study law there (Johnson, 2001a). While

in Texas, he continued his involvement in the local political scene, serving as a

Democratic precinct captain and working on local campaigns. Johnson also found time

to edit the *Texas Law Review* and earned his degree with honors. After graduating

from law school, Johnson was a clerk for the U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, for

Judge John R. Brown in Houston and New Orleans. In 1959, he landed a plum

assignment as a law clerk for Justice Hugo L. Black in the U.S. Supreme Court in

Washington, DC. Clearly, the years he spent with Black had a great deal of influence

on him. On Johnson's own Web site, he maintains a collection of Black's opinions and

speaks about his time there as one of his proudest achievements (N. Johnson, personal

communication, December 22, 2000).

In 1960, after earning his credentials, Johnson became an associate professor

of law at the University of California at Berkeley (Grubb, 1996; Johnson, 2001a). He

taught administrative law classes and authored a two-volume book of cases and

materials on oil and gas law in 1961. In 1963, Johnson took a position as an associate

at Covington & Burling, a large and prestigious law firm in Washington, DC. On

March 1, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson swore Nicholas Johnson in as the sole

administrator for the Maritime Administration (Grubb, 1996; Johnson, 2001a; Lebec,

1999). Johnson was the youngest man to ever have held the post. At 29 he was

responsible for a budget of $350 million and 2,500 employees.

Johnson tells a story about the day of his swearing-in ceremony in the cabinet

room of the White House with his father by his side:

> All my life to that point I had often been referred to as "Wendell
> Johnson's son" and proud to be. On this occasion, a reporter
> approached Dad and said, "You must be Nicholas Johnson's father."

> Dad often told the story and, as you can see, was seemingly even more pleased with the occasion—and his new title—than was the new, 29-year-old maritime administrator. (Johnson, 2001b)

Johnson attacked his new job with relish. His goal was "to test the hypothesis that he could take an old moribund, corrupt agency and breathe some life into it" (N. Johnson, personal interview, December 22, 2000). Johnson immediately began to question entrenched policies that subsidized a shipbuilding agency that was inefficient and unproductive (Grubb, 1996). He reallocated funding priorities and streamlined policies that allowed companies to build ships overseas to save on labor costs. He urged shipbuilders to automate. He discovered that it was possible to breathe new life into the agency but that it takes an enormous amount of energy to keep the "swamp waters from coming back." None of his directives endeared him to shipbuilders or the unions. His solutions were controversial, and he was unpopular in the shipbuilding industry.

While Johnson was at the agency, he learned an important lesson about the media that would influence the way he later thought about it (N. Johnson, personal interview, December 22, 2000). As a maritime administrator, he was responsible for all shipping in U.S. ports. He was charged with moving a huge shipment of wheat to the USSR at a time when they were desperately in need of it. This situation created a conflict with longshoremen who did not want to load the shipment on to ships carrying the wheat to a communist country. Johnson was unsuccessful in his effort to broker a compromise, so a special task force was formed consisting of representatives from the Departments of State, Labor, Agriculture, and Commerce. Cabinet officers and congressmen became involved, and businessmen from large

corporations became involved, but no one could seem to come up with a solution to the problem of getting food to a starving nation, that is until Walter Cronkite did a story on it on *The CBS Evening News*. The very next day, according to Johnson, the White House sent a message to him directing him to take whatever actions were necessary to get the shipment out. Shortly thereafter the shipment was on its way to the USSR.

This incident served to educate Johnson on the importance of the media (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). All the important people working on the task force could not seem to make a dent in the stalemate until the media brought the matter to the public's attention. Johnson realized the significance of cultivating the media in setting forth one's agenda. He also learned that he could take controversial policy decisions to the media when competing interest groups created political inertia and to utilize the resulting public pressure to break political logjams.

<u>Johnson at the Federal Communications Commission</u>

In 1966, President Johnson nominated Nicholas Johnson to a 7-year term on the FCC (Grubb, 1996; Johnson, 2001a; Lebec, 1999). Johnson stepped down from his post at the Maritime Administration after only 3 years, having served longer than any one else during peacetime (Baughman, 1981). His nomination hearing was uneventful, the broadcast industry viewed him as an unknown entity, and there was no hint of the controversy that would soon engulf the FCC. At 32, Johnson became the youngest member ever to serve on the FCC.

When Johnson assumed his new post, he vowed to spend his first few months

in office listening to what industry representatives had to say (Baughman, 1981; Grubb, 1996). He promised to keep an open mind and to consider all perspectives during the learning period of his post. After a few months in office, Johnson attended a meeting of the NAB and gathered information and opinions from industry leaders. While at the conference, he suggested that the FCC and the broadcasters should get together and develop a study on license renewal proceedings. He believed that the renewal period could be extended to increase efficiency.

Shortly thereafter a proposed merger between ABC and International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) came across his desk (Baughman, 1981; Grubb, 1996; Johnson, 1967). Johnson expressed his concern over the merger to his fellow commissioners and said ITT's initial answers to his questions were incomplete and evasive. He was worried that the economic interests of the new corporation would overshadow the television network's ability to provide unbiased coverage of world events. He wrote a letter to ITT expressing his apprehensions and asked if ITT's foreign possessions "would adversely affect ABC's news and public affairs programming" (Grubb, 1996, p. 12). When he did not receive an adequate response to the letter, he released it to the press. This action provoked the rage of both the broadcasting industry and his colleagues that would not abate during his tenure at the FCC. The FCC did not release internal grievances to the press, and Johnson was viewed as a turncoat.

Press coverage of the merger forced the FCC to hold hearings on the proposal (Baughman, 1981; Grubb, 1996; Junker, 1971). While the hearings on the issue were underway, Johnson learned that the senior vice president for public relations at ITT

was calling reporters at the *Washington Post*, the Associated Press, and the *Wall Street Journal* to get them to write stories about the hearings that were favorable to corporate interests (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). A reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, Eileen Chanahan, wrote an article about the attempt to influence reporters; consequently public opinion turned against the merger.

Johnson was outraged at the decision-making process that he observed at the FCC (Grubb, 1996; N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000; Junker, 1971). He noted in his 83-page dissent that the oral hearings were closed to the public even though the public had a major stake in the outcome of the decision (Baughman, 1981). Later, the Justice Department forced the FCC to reopen the case, and again Johnson wrote a 131-page joint dissent when the other commissioners again voted for approval. The Justice Department appealed the decision, and ultimately the merger was aborted. Johnson continued to write dissents throughout his term that were often used by the courts to overturn FCC decisions or to force the FCC to hold hearings on matters that would normally be resolved without fanfare.

The 1960s and 1970s were times when many members of society were questioning the legitimacy of institutions that were the cornerstones of civic life (Krasnow et al., 1982; Ranly, 1976; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). The mass media were not immune to this type of examination, and in fact, they were a focal point for the frustrations of citizens who were critical of the culture they believed the media were perpetuating (Armstrong, 1981). As an FCC commissioner, Nicholas Johnson brought this perspective to an agency that was fiercely devoted to maintaining the status quo. Industry representatives had nothing but disdain for Johnson (Grubb, 1996; Junker,

1971; Lebec, 1999). However, citizen groups working for media reform had nothing

but praise for him. The controversy that Johnson courted earned him much coverage in

the press, and Johnson devoted much of his efforts toward mobilizing public opinion

on these issues.

When a reporter asked him if he was a publicity hound, he replied that he did

not seek publicity. Rather he had a responsibility to speak out to the 204 million

people who paid his salary (Junker, 1971) Besides, he said:

> As one of the seven guys on the commission, most of the time in the
> minority, I've got to think what I can do in terms of cost-effectiveness.
> I'm not going to make FCC policy, I can here and there, I can
> embarrass them with a threatened dissent into not doing something that
> is totally and utterly corrupt, I can get language changed in a
> regulation. But by and large my effectiveness is not going to be much
> in terms of what other institutions in our society do in the field of
> communications, some of which will involve bringing pressure to bear
> on the FCC. And since I don't have enough energy to spend on losing
> battles, even my dissents must achieve a purpose: to help educate the
> public as to how corrupt the process is and the extent to which the
> corporate state dominates their lives. (Junker, 1971, p. 34)

Johnson said that the reason he attracted so much attention was because, as he

put it, it was "a man bites dog" sort of thing (N. Johnson, personal communication,

December 22, 2000). According to Johnson, the common situation is that regulatory

officials most often end up doing the bidding of the industry that they are charged with

regulating, which is nothing newsworthy. Instead he ended up speaking out for the

public interest, which was so unusual that it attracted the attention of the press.

Although it may have been the case that Johnson's opinions and actions as a

commissioner were unconventional, his appearance also was unconventional (Junker,

1971). He had long unruly hair and wore a droopy mustache. He wore old clothes, and

he rode his bicycle to work rather than driving to work in a government-issued sedan.

He liked to tell people that the reason he dressed as he did was because there were "so

many people in Washington who dressed like public officials and behaved like

bandits, that there ought to be at least one who looked like a bandit and behaved like a

public official" (Grubb, 1996; Junker, 1971).

During his 7-year term, Johnson published more than 350 articles in the trade

and popular press (Grubb, 1996; Johnson, 2001a; Lebec, 1999). He spoke in public

more than 100 times and appeared on the *Dick Cavett Show*, *Face the Nation*, *Mike

Douglas Show*, and *Phil Donahue Show*. Nicholas Johnson was the only FCC

commissioner to be on the cover of *Rolling Stone*, which led *Broadcasting* to call him

the "teenybopper commissioner" ("Teenybopper on the FCC," 1967).

Still a sitting commissioner, Johnson (1967) published *How to Talk Back to

Your Television Set*, a book describing how to influence the process of regulating the

broadcast industry. He donated all royalties from his book to organizations devoted to

improving the contribution of television to the quality of American life, listing them in

the appendix to the book. The one overriding theme in all of his speeches and articles

was that it was the public's right to insure that their property—the public airwaves—

were being used responsibly. He was determined to educate the public on their rights.

He also expressed a supreme displeasure over the amount of violence and the amount

of commercials in children's television programming. In *How to Talk Back to Your

Television Set*, he said:

> Though you may not know it, you can, and should, have a voice in
> deciding who will operate radio and TV stations in your community.
> This is the citizen's ultimate control over broadcast programming. A

broadcaster station owner is using the public's property, "the airwaves," and Congress has provided that he cannot "own" this property in the sense that the corner druggist owns his drugstore. A broadcaster is like an elected official, and his license entitles him to no more than a three-year term, after which he must either have his license renewed by the FCC or be turned out of office. You—his constituents—who are supposed to vote in this election often do not even know it is being held. (Johnson, 1967, p. 205)

Johnson was an optimist. He believed that a conscientious public could enact real media reform by utilizing their rights to influence the decision-making process. He did not believe an alternative to the existing system was necessary. Instead he believed the public needed to assert the rights they already had. He wrote that his intentions were to bring together the resources and talents of the industry, foundations, research organizations, universities, the government, and the media themselves to focus on the problems of broadcasting (Johnson, 1967).

During Johnson's tenure as commissioner, grassroots organizations dedicated to reforming the excesses of the media sprang up all over the country (Grundfest, 1976; Krasnow et al., 1982; Ranly, 1976; Rowland, 1982). These organizations put pressure on commercial broadcasters to put an end to violence and the amount and type of commercial advertisements on children's programs. They demanded that broadcasters remove all liquor and tobacco advertisements from television, and they insisted that television was contributing to harmful racial and ethnic stereotypes. They called for more public input into the regulatory process, and they put the industry on notice that they intended to take advantage of all of their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

The Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ had successfully

challenged the license renewal of a station in Jackson, Mississippi, that aired blatantly

racist programming (Grundfest, 1976; Korn, 1991; Krasnow et al., 1982; Ranly, 1976;

Rowland, 1982). That case established the legal right for public participation in the

regulatory process, and citizen groups began to challenge license applications and

renewals. Broadcasters sometimes found that it was easier to bargain with the groups

than to fight them outright. Local groups were getting together and starting their own

listener-supported community radio stations with volunteer programmers and

broadcasts of local public affairs (Milam, 1975; Soley, 1999). Beginning in 1970,

cable television began offering access channels to the public, and many cities around

the country experimented with locally produced programming (Engelman, 1996;

Linder, 1999). Alternative press publications began to appear, and journals devoted to

critiquing the media were founded.

Johnson's decisions on the FCC supported the grassroots initiatives. He was

responsible for opening up FCC meetings and hearings to the public. He worked to

require cable television local access channels. He worked to provide a framework for

evaluating broadcast licensees' public service records at renewal time and supported

diversity initiatives in media employment practices and programming. He fought

AT&T's pricing structures as detrimental to consumers' interests. He supported new

technology initiatives, and he championed the boundaries of the Fairness Doctrine

while arguing that public service announcements could be constructed as

counteradvertisements.

Johnson published *Test Pattern for Living* in 1972 (Johnson, 2001a). The

format of the book was unusual to say the least. All of the pages on the left side of the

book featured quotes and aphorisms, and the pages on the right side contained the text (Johnson, 2001a). The book explained his philosophy for living. In the preface to an edition of the book that is published in full on his Web site (Johnson, 2001a), Johnson explained that the book grew out of his conflict between his role as a public official and struggles that he was dealing with in his personal life. The book was very much a product of the time it was written—the early 1970s—a time when many people were exploring alternative lifestyles.

Like many people during this period of time, he began to question the Type A lifestyle he had led all his life. He married when he was 18 years old, had three children, and was now attempting to come to terms with his recent divorce (Johnson, 2001a). At the time he was exploring alternative lifestyles to his own. Many other people also were embarking on a process of self-discovery during this time period, but he was the only sitting member of the FCC to make his discoveries public (Junker, 1971). In the updated preface, Johnson (2001a) wrote that some of the ideas in the book seem overly optimistic and sophomoric, but the book also captures the spirit of the time in which it was written and provides readers with insights and advice that are still relevant 24 years after its initial publication.

The book features quotes from a wide array of public officials, philosophers, and writers ranging from Benjamin Spock, Allen Ginsburg, Charles Manson, and Frank Zappa to Walter Lippman, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Marshall McLuhan, Erik Barnouw, and Hermann Hesse to Barry M. Goldwater, Spiro Agnew, and John Lindsay (Johnson, 2001a). Johnson quotes extensively from the lyrics and writings of his friend Mason Williams, a song writer and veteran writer for the *Smothers Brothers*

Comedy Hour. In the text of the book, Johnson shared his views on everything from aerosol sprays to advertising, from the quality of the American diet to the quality of TV news. Never one to offer opinions without possible solutions, the main theme of Johnson's book was that the way to achieve happiness is by simplifying our lives.

Johnson (2001a) told us that we need not purchase many of the products advertised on our television sets. He advised us that a 22-cent box of baking soda will replace many useless and expensive products. He said that exercise is an essential component of happiness and recommended that people ride their bicycles to work, which cuts down on pollution, provides exercise, and creates a sense of well-being all at the same time. He offered his lifestyle as an example of how to simplify one's life. Johnson grew his own vegetables, ate no meat, and made his own breakfast cereal out of whole grains and dried fruits. He said he only owned the clothes that he needed to function and eschewed most material possessions. Johnson asked readers to consider adopting some of the lifestyle choices that had proven to be beneficial to him. This book did nothing to dispel his reputation as a free thinker.

Johnson's term on the FCC was set to expire in June 1973, but he stayed on until December when another commissioner could be appointed. The last project that Johnson completed before he left office was *Broadcasting in America*, a report that ranked network affiliates in each market according to community service standards (Grubb, 1996; Lebec, 1999; Shales, 1977). The report gave activists a blueprint for challenging stations that performed poorly according to the criteria he set forth. When Johnson became an FCC commissioner, he made the FCC's business the public's business. He had no qualms about writing dissents, many of which became the basis

for the appeal of FCC rulings (Baughman, 1981). Johnson wrote books, articles, and essays that informed a public that was largely ignorant of their rights to participate in broadcast regulatory decisions and comparative license renewal hearings. Johnson was a consumer advocate in an era when consumers were just beginning to assert their rights.

<div align="center">The National Citizens Committee for Public Television</div>

One of the offshoots of the Carnegie Commission was the formation of the NCCPTV (Ranly, 1976). According to Alan Pfifer, president of the Carnegie Commission, some members of the commission "felt a moral obligation to mobilize public sentiment in favor of the report's conclusions" (Ranly, 1976, p. 432). The first chair of the NCCPTV was Thomas P. Hoving, the former director of the New York City park system and then director of the Metropolitan Museum. The rest of the committee was made up of members from the public broadcasting and business establishment and included luminaries such as Newton Minow in its ranks. In addition, there were 47 members who served to represent the arts, education, educational broadcasting, and labor unions (Gould, 1966). The goal of the organization was to support public broadcasting by testifying in Congress, creating a dues-paying membership organization, and speaking out in favor of funding proposals.

Hoving at 36 years old was a passionate man who had a penchant for grabbing headlines (Gould, 1966; Ranly, 1976). It was not long before he spoke out on some of the broader issues of broadcasting. In one of his first statements to the press, he accused commercial broadcasters of abdicating their duties to their public service

responsibilities while reaping huge profits. He went on to say that there should be a

substantial levy imposed on them in the form of a licensing fee in order to subsidize

public broadcasting. This statement and others alarmed commercial broadcasters and

alienated some of the members of his organization. Hoving soon backed off slightly

and announced that the goal of the NCCPTV was to get people interested in public

television and that this would be the focus of the committee. The board of directors

urged Hoving to adopt a rhetoric of cooperation, a course that had hampered the goals

of reformers in the 1930s (McChesney, 1993).

In July 1968, the committee issued *A Report to the American People* that

further clarified the goals of the NCCPTV (Ranly, 1976). The report said that the

committee would strive to point out the potential of public broadcasting for serving the

nation; they would request that full authorization for the money recommended by the

Carnegie Commission be appropriated to public broadcasting immediately; they would

work for a definitive plan that would provide for the long-term funding of public

broadcasting without being subject to annual review; and they would act to promote

the programs offered by public television stations so that they would be more widely

viewed by the American public.

Still it was not long before Hoving would resume his adversarial stance

towards commercial broadcasters (Ranly, 1976). It also was not long before there was

dissention in the ranks of the committee itself, due largely to Hoving's aggressive

criticism of commercial programming. The schism between those who wished to

cooperate with commercial broadcasters and those who wanted to confine their

activities to the promotion of public broadcasting widened. (The chair of the CPB

disassociated the organization from the NCCPTV.) Despite the controversy, after a

period of reorganization, the committee had doubled the size of its board of trustees

and established a 10-member executive committee that met monthly. In October 1968,

it changed its name to the NCCB, reflecting its new enlarged vision of addressing

broadcasting as a whole. According to Ranly (1976), the NCCB intended to concern

itself with upgrading all of broadcasting "by conducting studies, making public

statements, issuing publications, by lobbying and proposing legislation, not only to

benefit noncommercial broadcasting, but to improve commercial broadcasting as

well" (Ranly, 1976, p. 472).

The National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting

By the late 1960s, the growing consumer rights movement, led by Ralph Nader

and his raiders, created a social climate that encouraged media activists to assert their

rights as consumers and citizens. During the years between 1971 and 1973, petitions to

deny the renewal of 342 stations had been filed. Activists were starting to use the

principles of the Fairness Doctrine to influence coverage of various viewpoints that

had often been ignored. They called for more public input into the regulatory process,

and they put the industry on notice that they intended to take advantage of all of their

rights and responsibilities as citizens.

During this period, the NCCB was subject to infighting among its members

who could not seem to decide on a clear direction for the group (Ranly, 1976). By

February 1969, the NCCB ran out of money when the original foundations that

supported it declined to renew their commitments. There were those within the

organization who believed that the NCCB's long-term, fund-raising problems had to do with the group's lack of prestige and its antiestablishment stance. One faction of the committee wanted to recruit more prominent members of the community, and the other faction, led by Hoving, wanted to broaden its membership base to include more citizens who were more broadly representative of the constituency they hoped to serve. It looked as if the organization would have to disband, and then at the last minute the Benton Foundation came to the rescue with a generous 2-year grant that led the way for other contributors (NCCB, 1975a). Now the NCCB was able to continue its efforts to challenge license renewals, and it spoke against two nominees to the FCC saying that "any man who looks at broadcasting as nothing more than just another business to be conducted like any other business has no right to serve on the FCC" (Ranly, 1976, p. 481).

Hoving and the NCCB continued to make headlines with fiery rhetoric. In March, Robert Montgomery, a member of the NCCB board of trustees and a strong supporter of Hoving's adversarial stance, testified before the Senate Subcommittee on Communications and demanded more money for public broadcasting because "millions of citizens are tired of the waste and pollution of the greatest of their natural resources, the airwaves" (NCCB, 1974a). Later that year Hoving declared "that the V in TV has come to stand for violence" (NCCB, 1975a, p. 3). He asked parents to consider if children were becoming increasingly desensitized to violence from being endlessly exposed to it on television.

Nicholas Johnson Addresses the National Citizens

Commission for Broadcasting

In November, the NCCB held a luncheon at the St. Regis Hotel in New York

City to honor FCC Commissioner Nicholas Johnson for championing citizens' rights

in broadcasting. Johnson, a controversial and outspoken commissioner who had a

reputation as a strong advocate for consumers' involvement in the regulation of the

broadcasting industry, laid out what would become his agenda for media reform

(Johnson, 1969). In his speech to the NCCB, Johnson began his remarks by saying

that the primary focus of any public service organization should be to educate the

public so that citizens could assert their rights as media consumers. Second, Johnson

said that organizations like the NCCB should be participating in the legal arena by

challenging poor FCC decisions in court and by proposing legislation in Congress.

Johnson also said that the NCCB should be supporting proposals to limit network

programming on affiliate stations. He pointed out that the original theory behind the

Communications Act of 1934 was that stations should be providing "a local service,

local programming, local talent, local news and public affairs, a sense of identity and

participation and solutions to local problems" (Johnson, 1969, p. 12). Johnson said

that the NCCB should weigh in on these types of issues by supporting filings with the

FCC in this area.

Johnson (1969) also told the committee that they should be considering how

they could act to coordinate the efforts of media reform activists. Johnson suggested

that the NCCB could act as an umbrella organization for groups such as ACT, the

Consumer Union, Black Efforts for Soul in Television, the CCC, the United Church of

Christ, and others who could accomplish more on their own if they were united within a central organization.

Johnson said that new technology held promise for media reformers, and he pointed out that there were still many unused channels on the spectrum, especially in the UHF and FM bands. Johnson maintained that cable television (CATV) offered a virtually unlimited number of television channels that could be brought into the home. He predicted that CATV would revolutionize the functioning of mass communications in the United States. He urged his audience to take advantage of the opportunities that this and other new technologies had to offer. Johnson's remarks were well received at the luncheon, and he would eventually get the opportunity to act on his recommendations when he assumed the post of chair of the NCCB in 1973.

The National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting Prepares for Johnson

The next 2 years at the NCCB brought more internal changes, but the organization was still able to accomplish some of its goals (NCCB, 1975a; Ranly, 1976). Hoving stepped down from his position and assumed the role of an advisor. After yet another reorganization, the committee announced that it would relocate its headquarters to Washington, DC, and appointed Warren Braren as its interim executive director. The NCCB now shared office space and research staff with Albert H. Kramer's CCC, a public service media law firm. Braren pledged to the board of directors that he would tone down the wild attacks on commercial broadcasters that had led to so much dissention in the past.

Following the move to Washington, DC, the NCCB was able to enlist the

Reverend Everett Parker, director of the Office of Communication of the United

Church of Christ, and Peggy Charren, then secretary of ACT, to the Board of Trustees

(Ranly, 1976). The NCCB boasted that it had 16,000 members on the rolls at this time,

but they still had no clear direction. They continued to file petitions on behalf of the

public's right to participate in the regulatory process. Their fund-raising efforts

eventually paid off as the group obtained more credibility and prominence than they

had during Hoving's administration.

In October 1970, the NCCB arranged the first National Citizens Conference on

Citizens Rights in broadcasting bringing together an unprecedented 2,000 activists in

New York City (NCCB, 1975a). The 3-day conference held panel discussions on

minority inclusion, program diversity, children's television, politics and television, the

proper role of government, concentration of the industry, and how to effect positive

change in broadcasting (Ranly, 1976). Although the conference was well attended by

activists, commercial broadcasters declined to participate. In fact, there were several

disputes over the emphasis of the program and who would be allowed to speak.

Nonetheless, it did give participants a forum for the exchange of ideas and a sense of

inclusion in a larger community of activists who were building a movement.

During the remainder of the year, the NCCB filed positive comments on the

FCC proposed *Primer of Ascertainment of Community Problems*, a document that

detailed a licensee's obligation to survey the needs and interests of local audiences

(Grundfest, 1976; NCCB, 1975a). The organization provided a small grant to ACT to

study the effects of commercialization on children's programming, filed comments on

CATV regulation, and urged the FCC to limit multiple ownership of CATV systems. Apparently the NCCB took Johnson's advice to coordinate the efforts of other organizations seriously.

Over the next 2 years, the NCCB joined the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ, ACT, and the Council on Children, Media, and Merchandizing to request that broadcasters make available to the public the actual contents of a composite week of children's programming, including advertisements (NCCB, 1975a). The NCCB also submitted statements to the Senate Communications Subcommittee favoring limitations on political spot advertisements and limitations on the total amount of money being spent on political campaigns in the media.

The NCCB continued its public education program by publishing a report on public interest groups who were working on projects involving the media (NCCB, 1975a). It also published *An International Comparison of Children's Television Programming* and distributed it to libraries, the press, and public service organizations. In April 1972, the NCCB began distributing *Citizen's Network*, a newsletter for its membership, and in September, it distributed 5,000 copies of a political advertising kit that contained articles discussing the major issues on campaign commercials. Then, once again, the money ran out, and the NCCB was forced to reorganize (Ranly, 1976).

Although the structure of the organization remained ambiguous by the end of 1972, some of the projects and activities of the NCCB during its 6 years of existence would provide a springboard for the more sustained projects to be undertaken in the future. Many of the recommendations that Johnson (1969) had made to the NCCB

formed the basis for the most successful strategies the NCCB had used over the

previous 2 years. As Johnson's term on the FCC came to a close, many members of

the NCCB believed that he would be the ideal person to take over the NCCB (C.

Shepherd, personal communication, March 13, 2001).

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING A MEDIA REFORM ORGANIZATION

While Johnson was still at the FCC, Charles Benton approached him about the possibility of leading a restructured NCCB (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). Johnson was not interested in parlaying his job at the commission into a high paid job in the service sector; in fact, he thought the idea of taking advantage of the contacts he had made in the public service sector for private profit was obscene. However, Johnson was interested in continuing his role at the FCC in another capacity, and he was also considering running for Congress from Iowa.

Charles Benton and his father, William, had been active from the very beginning in all of the various incarnations of the NCCB (NCCB, 1974a, 1975a). William Benton was a former senator from Connecticut, a member of the original Carnegie Commission, and the chairman of the board of *Encyclopedia Britannica*. He had always been an outspoken critic of the quality of television programming and believed it was an underutilized resource (Johnson, 1969). Charles Benton was the president of Films, Incorporated. After his father's death, he became the principal administrator for the Benton Foundation, a philanthropic organization supported in part by royalties accrued from the invention of *Muzak* and the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). The Bentons

had provided most of the continuity of imagination, energy, and funding that had carried the NCCB this far, and the foundation was willing to provide funding again if Johnson would agree to be chair (NCCB, 1975a, 1975b). According to Chuck Shepherd, Johnson's office manager at the FCC and later the editor of *access*, "Charles Benton and several other foundation people said that they were basically putting money down to keep Nicholas Johnson in the public eye" (C. Shepherd, personal communication, March 14, 2001).

Benton proposed that a new nonprofit, tax exempt corporation be formed with Johnson as its head (NCCB, 1974a, 1975b; Johnson, 1975a). In an effort to avoid making the same mistakes that the NCCPTV and NCCB had made in the past, he recommended that a detailed study of the media reform movement be undertaken before committing to any programs. Benton believed that, with the rise of media reform groups that were springing up all over the country, the need for an independent national organization like the old NCCB was sharply reduced. Instead Benton wanted to investigate the need for a national organization that would act as an umbrella group for all the small community-based organizations. He asked Johnson to take up to a year to plan for an organization that could build on to the membership base that the NCCB still had. Benton wanted Johnson to explore some of the areas of activity that he had outlined in his luncheon speech. He was sure that with enough planning the NCCB could gain support for their programs from other foundations. When Benton secured additional funding for research from the J. M. Kaplan Fund, the Ruth L. Ottinger Fund, and the Stern Fund, Johnson agreed to take the position in June 1973 when his term on the FCC was set to expire (NCCB, 1973a, 1973b).

Johnson ended up staying at the FCC for 6 more months while President Richard M. Nixon searched for a new nominee to fill his post (Johnson, 1974a). During this period, Johnson also sought the opinions of those groups with which he came into contact during the course of doing business for the FCC. He wrote a letter in November to community activists in the Washington, DC, area inviting them to participate in an FCC meeting scheduled on November 12 (Johnson, 1973a). In the letter, he said it was more important than ever to have citizen participation in broadcast regulation and further stated he was working on a plan geared towards "strengthening local community media activity and for providing mechanisms for direct financial, technical, and legal assistance to local groups" (Johnson, 1973a, n.p.). He asked these groups to share their ideas with him, and he signed the letter "Peace and Justice, Nicholas Johnson."

The goal of the meeting was to solicit advice from community groups and let them know in no uncertain terms that Nicholas Johnson intended to continue the fight to reform broadcasting after he left office (NCCB, 1973b). The meeting was designed not only to gather information but also to stress the potential for change if local groups were able to coordinate their efforts under the auspices of a national organization. Johnson was a good listener, an excellent speaker and motivator, and someone who projected the aura of a man who could make his vision into reality. Johnson would capitalize on these strengths of character during the countless meetings and events that he attended throughout his tenure at the NCCB.

Before leaving the FCC, Johnson prepared a draft of a position paper outlining how he intended to implement his plans for the organization (Johnson, 1973b). First,

extensive research to ascertain the needs of the media reform movement and to

investigate the viability of a national communications coalition needed to be

conducted (Johnson, 1973c). Johnson said that he required a core staff of two people

hired on a full-time basis. Both staff members would work under the direction of

Johnson who would lead the organization, devote writing and public speaking time to

it, and assist in the coordination of overall activities. Albert Kramer would assume the

position of executive director and general counsel. In addition, Warren Graves would

work on a regular part-time basis as a community contact coordinator and function as

an outreach coordinator.

Surveying the Movement

Johnson outlined what he hoped to accomplish in Phase 1 of the project

(Johnson, 1973b, 1973c; NCCB, 1975b). First and foremost, an extensive analysis of

existing resources would need to be conducted. This analysis would include an

assessment of the number of groups involved in media advocacy and the constituency

of those groups. Johnson wanted to know what types of resources were at the disposal

of those groups and what their needs were in relation to the specific media in the

region where they operated. In addition, it would be necessary to project the

availability of local expertise and to determine whether or not each group considered

the strategies it used to date to be successful. During the course of this research, a

mailing list would be created from the information that was gathered. A second goal of

the research would be to determine what new resources might be available to the

media reform movement. A survey of national special interest organizations with local

affiliates such as environmental groups, healthcare programs, labor unions, women's organizations, and other groups would determine what the current media involvement of these groups was, what their media needs were, and whether or not they would be willing to provide support for media advocacy at both a local and national level.

Testing Strategies

Johnson wanted to create long-range media advocacy goals and programs during Phase 1 of the project, but he was also pragmatic (Johnson, 1973b, 1973c; NCCB, 1975b). In order to properly evaluate proposals, he suggested that this phase of the project include some actual test marketing. For example, a media ombudsmen could be trained and placed in different markets to assist local special interest groups in the area. In addition, he proposed that some academic or policy planning research could be conducted for use in policy statements or in policy- related lawsuits. Just as critical to the planning process was the need to conduct fund-raising studies. The first phase of the project would have to include the preparation of proposals to foundations and individual donors. In addition, Phase 1 was to include the preparation of solicitation letters and advertisements designed to recruit a membership base. Johnson believed it would be appropriate to organize fund-raising events during this stage of planning. After the research was completed, a comprehensive plan of action would be designed. Johnson estimated that this phase of the project would take 9 to 12 months to complete.

Creating a Vision

Johnson envisioned an organization that functioned as a public interest communications trade association that would emphasize affiliate autonomy and collective strength (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000; Johnson, 1973b, 1973c, 1974b; NCCB, 1973b, 1975b). He speculated that such an organization might use membership fees, mass mailings, and special events fund-raisers to hire staff that would assist local groups. He wanted the NCCB to institute training programs to develop expertise among community activists. Johnson also believed the new NCCB should function as a clearinghouse of information for the movement through publication of directories, newsletters, sourcebooks on strategies, and generally act as a catalyst for information dissemination.

In the position papers, Johnson recommended that a communication research center be formed (Johnson, 1973b, 1974b; NCCB, 1975b). The center could sponsor communication-related research projects and develop national policy positions. In addition, this arm of the NCCB could conduct legal research that would benefit its members and provide information for legislators. In addition, Johnson said that the organization would speak out on broad policy issues on an ad hoc basis.

Johnson's proposal for restructuring the NCCB was based on a single premise. He believed the viability of a national public interest communication organization was directly dependent on the existence of local activity generated by citizen groups in their own communities (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). The NCCB would work towards that end result so it could help to generate a process that defines the public interest standard in the public's own terms. If this were to

occur, Johnson speculated that the FCC could function as an arbiter of complaints between the broadcast industry and the citizens for whom it is licensed to serve rather than reacting to industry concerns (Johnson, 1973b, 1974b).

From the beginning of Johnson's involvement with the NCCB, it was clear that he had a vision of what he wanted to accomplish with the organization. If his vision was lacking in any respect, it was in the area of how the day-to-day business of the organization would be structured. Johnson's initial proposal created a broad rationale for the type of organization he envisioned; however, before any action could be taken, a concrete blueprint would have to be drawn.

<u>The First Year of the New National Citizens Committee</u>
<u>for Broadcasting</u>

As noted previously, although Johnson's 7-year term at the FCC expired in June 1973, he stayed on until December 5, 1973, due to the delay in the appointment of his successor (Johnson, 1973d). When he finally resigned, he simultaneously announced that he would become the new chairman of the NCCB and also would seek election to Congress from Iowa's Third Congressional District. In a subsequent communication, he said that if he were to win the congressional seat, he saw no conflict in continuing his role as chair of the NCCB on a part-time basis (Johnson, 1974c). In fact, he believed that it would be advantageous for the NCCB to have a voice in the legislature.

In January, Johnson was formally elected to the position of chair of the NCCB by the board of directors (NCCB, 1974c). Since Johnson believed it was necessary to

legally restructure the NCCB, four board members from the old NCCB continued to serve on the board of the new organization. The individuals selected to provide continuity were Charles Benton; Earle K. Moore, of the law firm Moore, Berson & Bernstein of New York City; the Reverend Everett C. Parker of the United Church of Christ; and Phil Watson, a Washington, DC, based media consultant to national organizations and members of Congress. The budget for the new NCCB included a $6,000 salary for half-time work for Johnson and salaries for a project coordinator, a staff assistant, and a part-time community liaison. The remainder of the budget covered office, printing, and travel expenses (NCCB, 1974a, 1974c).

Meanwhile, Johnson spent much of his time campaigning in Iowa. In a letter to the board of directors, he told them how he intended to get the organization off the ground despite the fact that he also was running for Congress (Johnson, 1974c). Johnson said that he had assembled some of the most able and dedicated people in the country to help him run the NCCB. He described Kramer as a tough, brilliant organizer and lawyer who was the founder of the CCC (a group of professional lawyers who provide legal services to the public interest broadcast reform movement) who had agreed to serve on a part-time basis as president and general counsel of the NCCB. Warren Graves agreed to become the community liaison director for the NCCB; he had a vast amount of experience organizing projects for African American community groups. Chuck Shepherd, Johnson's general office manager at the FCC, signed on as executive director, and Carol Anderson agreed to leave her high-paying position with the Watergate inquiry to come to work for the NCCB. Johnson said that all of these people could command considerably higher salaries in the private sector

but agreed to work at the NCCB because they were highly committed to the media reform movement. Shepherd said that he joined the staff because he believed "that many TV station owners and managers, and certainly the networks and trade associations, were pigs and needed to lose some of their power somehow" (C. Shepherd, personal communication, March 14, 2001).

In a status report written for the board of directors, Shepherd wrote that the staff had begun to contact broadcast reform groups to ascertain their needs so that a realistic plan could be developed (Shepherd, 1974a). They had a list of more than 1,000 groups that they wanted to contact by telephone or written surveys; in fact, they had already met with dozens of groups during the Citizen's Energy Conference in Washington, DC. Johnson had been hosting monthly luncheons with representatives from government and the public interest movement in Washington, DC, to brainstorm ideas for the new organization.

In February, the staff was sidetracked from their primary program when they saw a need to speak out in opposition to the nomination of James H. Quello to replace Johnson on the FCC (Johnson 1974b; Shepherd, 1974a). There were many reasons why they had decided to oppose Quello's appointment, chief among them was their opinion that Quello had a conflict of interest stemming from the fact that he had himself been a broadcaster for 25 years and had served on the industry's self-regulatory panel (NCCB, 1974e). He also had been reprimanded by his employer, Capital Cities Broadcasting Corporation, for alleged racial insensitivity. The NCCB also was opposed to Quello because he had donated $1,100 to President Nixon's reelection campaign, yet he was being asked to fill a Democratic seat on the

commission. Shepherd said that Quello had consistently "given short shrift to the legitimate demands of citizen and consumer groups while manager of a radio station, while a member of the Detroit Housing Commission, and while a member of the NAB's Radio Code arm" (Shepherd, 1974a, p. 2).

Sixteen days after officially incorporating, the new NCCB was able to organize support for the opposition of Quello that ended up producing an unprecedented 8 days of hearings with 25 witnesses representing citizen interests appearing before the Senate Communications Subcommittee (Johnson, 1974c; Shepherd, 1974a). The staff also distributed a background package to reporters with major periodicals and to the subcommittee. Shepherd believed that the hearings helped to publicize the concerns of media reformers. Encouraged by the success of their efforts, Shepherd said that he and the rest of the staff were considering the feasibility of conducting other ad hoc projects. Shepherd and Johnson discussed the possibility of having a Nick Johnson *Dissent From Exile* program to call the public's attention to poor FCC decisions that frequently passed without dissent (NCCB, 1974d). The staff discussed the possibility of organizing hearings in communities right before license renewal time so that citizens would have the opportunity to testify for or against local broadcasters. They were also considering the viability of publishing a newsletter about events taking place within the broadcast industry.

In April, the NCCB published a book-length manual that described how citizens could assert their rights to create a more responsive form of broadcasting (NCCB, 1974a). *Demystifying Broadcasting* was a compilation of articles written by activists explaining the responsibilities of broadcasters and the remedies that were at

the disposal of the public. The manual also contained a comprehensive directory of organizations working to reform broadcasting and provided a list of the dates when station licensees were up for renewal.

<div align="center">Structuring an Organization</div>

By May 17, 1974, another more detailed program proposal was mailed to the board of directors (NCCB, 1974d). The 39-page document was structured to resemble a foundation proposal, but the main function of it was to indicate all of the options available to the organization (Johnson, 1974d). In a memo to the board, Shepherd said that one of the purposes of the document was to give the board an overview of how the NCCB would be structured (Shepherd, 1974b). The introduction to the document stated that the newly incorporated NCCB would be operated as a nonprofit, tax exempt, public interest membership organization dedicated to broadcast reform. The approach the new NCCB would take would be fundamentally different from the one the original NCCB had taken. This time the overall goal would be "to establish a permanent structure of support services to existing national, regional, and local organizations active to some degree in securing more responsible broadcast media" (NCCB, 1974d, p. 4). Concurrently, the NCCB planned to encourage any groups that were not yet active in the broadcast reform effort to join the process. With a philosophy of *open media, open regulatory processes*, the NCCB also planned to press the debate on selected issues.

This document listed a long line of research that showed that the influence of the media could have a detrimental effect on society (NCCB, 1974e, 1974f). For

example, the Kerner Commission on Race Relations concluded that the media played a divisive role in society, the Eisenhower Commission concluded that the media had an influence on violence in society, and the surgeon general's report found that the media negatively influenced children. Consequently, the report stated that there was ample justification for creating a new NCCB and that "the very quality of human life depends on the public's ability to comprehend and control the force of broadcasting" (NCCB, 1974f, p. 2).

The rationale for forming the NCCB gave the board of directors a sense of the current media reform environment (NCCB, 1974f). The rationale stated that the Communications Act of 1934 dictated that broadcasters can retain their licenses only if they serve the public interest. The WBLT case brought forward by the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ and settled in 1969 created the principle that a station's consumers have standing to participate in the FCC's licensing process.

In another case important to the movement, the FCC ruled in 1967 that broadcasters were required to air antismoking information as part of their Fairness Doctrine obligations. In Media, Pennsylvania, 19 local civic and religious organizations charged in a petition to deny that WXUR-AM-FM systematically vilified ethnic and racial minorities and refused to air other viewpoints in violation of the Fairness Doctrine and contrary to the community's interest. The FCC subsequently revoked the station's license (NCCB, 1974a).

In 1970, the CCC negotiated a settlement with Capital Cities Broadcasting

Corporation that established a $1 million minority programming fund in exchange for

dropping a challenge against a Capital Cities station acquisition. In Los Angeles, a

local group negotiated with a station in that market to drop violent children's

programming from their schedule.

In 1973, the NCCB had successfully petitioned the FCC to force stations to

allow the public access to stations' programming logs (NCCB, 1974b, 1974e). Due in

large part to increased public involvement in the regulatory process, the FCC created

more opportunities for public participation by instituting elaborate ascertainment

requirements for licensees to adhere to, thus giving citizens criteria for evaluating a

broadcaster's performance. In addition, in the 1969 *Red Lion Case*, the U.S. Supreme

Court ruled that it was the right of the viewers and listeners, not the right of

broadcasters, that is paramount.

According to this analysis, there had never been a more opportune time to take

advantage of the new tools that were available to those working to reform the structure

of broadcasting (NCCB, 1974f). An organization like the proposed NCCB could

exploit these new opportunities. One of the main obstacles to the broadcast reform

movement in the late 1960s, as well as in the 1930s, was its failure to get the public at

large interested in these vital issues. Up until 1974, previous reform efforts had been

limited to efforts of organizations or individual activists that were grossly understaffed

and underfunded. A central national advocate organization that made arguments for a

collective membership could be a powerful voice that represented the voices of

individual citizens. Furthermore, the NCCB could provide support services for the

dozens of organizations that could be more effective with additional resources.

However, the most pressing problem to be solved was to convince as many public service organizations as possible that they had a direct stake in the outcome of any effort to reform media.

Another promising trend, also detailed in the report, was that many groups dedicated to causes wholly apart from media had begun to realize the influence that the media had on their specific issues (NCCB, 1974f). The National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Urban League, the United Church of Christ, and the ACLU, among others, had created full-time media positions within their organizations. The task at hand for the NCCB would be to raise the consciousness of other organizations and of the general public. Accordingly, the only way to balance the power of the broadcast industry would be to harness the power of public interest and community service organizations, media amateurs, and the general public by educating them and informing them of their rights.

While the NCCB was still in the process of planning for a program of action in May 1974, they had already completed a considerable body of research (NCCB, 1974f). Johnson mailed a three-page letter and questionnaire to 500 groups that had been active in some aspect of broadcast reform. The letter asked these groups to send the NCCB brochures, news clippings, and publications that were available from their organizations. Group representatives were encouraged to visit the NCCB office. In addition, the staff made 200 follow-up phone calls to other organizations, with some of the ensuing conversations lasting up to 1 hour. Johnson continued his monthly brainstorming luncheons with government and public interest leaders.

It was becoming clear that the groups contacted had an overwhelming need for

more information (NCCB, 1974f). Many of these organizations said that they lacked background information about the broadcast industry that they needed to be effective. Not only were they uninformed about what other organizations in the field were doing, but they expressed the need for in-depth analysis of key issues. Some of the groups contacted said there was a need for new research, especially in the area of broadcast management. Some groups said they would be willing to pay for this type of information, and most expressed interest in the concept of the NCCB as a national membership organization. All of the groups said regional conferences would be helpful to the movement.

Now that Johnson and the NCCB had determined there was a need for the type of organization they envisioned, they were ready to create a program that would provide general support in the form of various information services, national and regional conference coordination, consulting services, a research and special projects arm, a speaker's bureau, and a public membership program (NCCB, 1974f). In addition to these services, Johnson wanted the NCCB to function as a counterinstitution to traditional government and industry power, to become the "NAB" of the broadcast reform movement. To this end, the NCCB proposed that a separate corporation be established so that it could take contributions for its lobbying efforts. (Tax exempt organizations were prohibited from lobbying on their own.)

Phase 2

In order to meet the information needs of the broadcast reform community, Phase 2 of the NCCB project called for the establishment of two weekly or biweekly

newsletters (NCCB, 1974f). One newsletter would be for consumers and would be

offered as a membership benefit, and the other would contain news of activities within

the movement, think pieces on strategy, management information, and analysis and

interpretation of major issues. Phase 2 also called for updating and revising the first

edition of *Demystifying Broadcasting* with an expanded directory and bibliography.

The proposal also included a provision for the publication of a set of market profiles

for the 209 television advertising markets. The profile would include information

about local broadcast media in the marketplace, sources for research assistance, public

interest professionals in the area, and lists of public service organizations in the area.

This publication would be sold to libraries and local and national organizations.

Phase 2 of the project also called for the organization of national conferences

that would be held twice a year (NCCB, 1974f). The NCCB conferences would feature

government officials, community organizers, members of the business community,

and academic researchers. The concept behind the conferences would be not only to

create a forum for the exchange of information but also to provide motivation for

those who worked long hours without any signs of an immediate payoff. The

conferences would be low-budget affairs.

Consulting services would be provided to NCCB's membership in the form of

a full-time community liaison officer (NCCB, 1974f). The officer would receive legal

training, academic training, community organizing training, fund-raising and publicity

training, and training in broadcast station relations. This person would spend

approximately 100 days per year traveling throughout the country speaking to groups

and giving them advice. Part of the officer's duties would be to write about the *state of*

the movement in NCCB's newsletter and in the national media.

The NCCB also planned to create a research arm that would be staffed by a professional communications specialist with a graduate degree in an area of the media (NCCB, 1974f). That person would be in charge of creating an internship program for students living in the Washington, DC, area. The interns would conduct research for the NCCB's information publications and other long-term research projects. At this point, the NCCB was considering several projects. Many of the groups that had been contacted suggested that a study on the airing of public service announcements at the local level would reveal that controversial ones were not getting on the air. Others suggested that the NCCB could investigate how the A. C. Nielsen Company measured the number of people watching television and determine whether or not those ratings actually represented the broadcast audience as a whole. Other groups asked the NCCB to study the economics of a typical broadcast station, saying that it would be helpful if this information could be provided to groups that wanted to counter broadcasters' claims that financial constraints inhibit their ability to produce more meaningful programming.

The proposal contained a provision for the creation of a speaker's bureau to arrange for Johnson's itinerary (NCCB, 1974f). The bureau would also book the community liaison officer's speeches and would arrange to book, for a fee, other speakers of interest to the movement. The bureau would create a pool of speakers who would donate their fees to the NCCB, and all of Johnson's fees would be remitted to the organization. The feeling was that this could become a considerable source of revenue for the NCCB and would help to publicize the organization.

Phase 2 of the NCCB's proposed program also included plans for an ambitious membership drive (NCCB, 1974f). There were 16,000 members of the old NCCB, and those names were still available to the new organization. Johnson believed that in order to gain political legitimacy the NCCB needed to be able to represent a national constituency that was more than just a coalition of like-minded organizations, and it also needed to represent a massive membership base of citizens (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). The goal was to increase the membership rolls to 25,000 by the end of 1975 and to double that number the following year. The NCCB would ask members to contribute $10, and in exchange they would receive a newsletter, an annual report, and a promise that the NCCB would "raise hell on a specified list of issues encompassed by the philosophy of open media, open access" (NCCB, 1974f, p. 23). A list of issues to be addressed might include the decommercialization of media, equal employment opportunity, decentralization of economic control of the industry, and an increase of local community-oriented programs.

The NCCB also planned to establish a community organizing project that was a variant of Nader and his raiders' model (NCCB, 1974f). The plan was for the NCCB to recruit an individual from 1 of each of the top 10 media markets in the country. This individual would be employed by the NCCB for 1 year. For the first 3 months, the activist would receive extensive training in Washington, DC. After receiving training, the activist would be sent back into the community and would be set up with a bare-bones office and a part-time support person. The task of educating a city would be accomplished by speaking at public service organization meetings, gathering publicity

for the goals of the movement, and organizing grassroots efforts to pressure local broadcasters to create more responsive local media.

In order to achieve its goal of becoming a counterinstitutional force to the NAB, Johnson proposed that the NCCB employ six full-time professionals whose job it would be to initiate, cultivate, and maintain daily contact with the staffs of the FCC's Broadcast Bureau, Cable Bureau, and Office of General Counsel (Johnson, 1975i; NCCB, 1974f). These people would be responsible for bringing appropriate information to the attention of government officials who were often dependent on information given to them by the broadcast industry when making their decisions. Concurrently, the National Citizens Communications Lobby (NCCL) would provide the same type of services before Congress. The main function of the NCCL would be to represent the NCCB's philosophy of open media, that is, open regulatory processes in a variety of contexts before the legislature.

This document would be further revised, and details would be added. Some of the preliminary programs outlined would be deleted, and others would be expanded. Nonetheless, this paper would become the philosophical foundation of the NCCB, and if it was not yet a comprehensive blueprint for action, it was at least a rendering.

While Kramer and Shepherd continued to work on ad hoc projects in the NCCB offices in Washington, DC, Johnson's congressional campaign consumed much of his time (Johnson, 1974e, 1975c; N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). The outcome of the primary was as controversial as Johnson's previous career activities had been. Johnson and another candidate running in a four-

man field ended up with virtually the same number of votes. The Mesquakie Indians,

who lived within the district, were denied a polling place during the election;

consequently they sued and a special election was called. After the second election,

Johnson lost by 6 votes. Rather than asking for another recount, he conceded the

election. Although Johnson lost the campaign, he said he gained valuable insight into

what a 480,000 cross-section of America was thinking. He spent most of his time for

the remainder of the year in Iowa working on a book about his experiences at the FCC.

He planned to return to Washington, DC, in January to resume his post at the NCCB

on a full-time basis.

By the end of the year, the NCCB had an impressive list of ad hoc

accomplishments under its belt (Johnson, 1975j; NCCB, 1974e, 1975d). Despite the

testimony of more than 25 citizen groups at the confirmation hearings of James

Quello, he was ultimately appointed to be Johnson's replacement on the FCC. Still the

hearings had created favorable publicity for the movement and its concerns. When

Luther Holcomb was nominated for a commission seat, the NCCB, led by Kramer,

swung into action. Holcomb was up for a Democratic seat on the commission, yet

Kramer had obtained access to letters Holcomb sent to the White House staff

explaining that he was totally dedicated to the reelection of Nixon and Texas

Republican John Tower in 1972. Holcomb's letter also advised the White House staff

of confidential proceedings against several corporate contributors to Nixon's

campaign. After Kramer released the letter to the press, Holcomb withdrew his name

from consideration (NCCB, 1975d). When the FCC planned to hold a public input

session in May, the NCCB helped to plan the agenda and had the commission mail

notices of the meeting to NCCB contacts. Initially, the FCC had planned to invite only

broadcasters to attend the meeting. It turned out, however, that 200 other activists

from five states and a representative from the NCCB were there as well.

Kramer was busy that year (Johnson, 1975e, 1975m; NCCB, 1975c). In April,

he prepared a 30-page memorandum for Rep. Lionel Van Deerlin of the Senate

Communications Subcommittee on the Broadcast License Renewal Act (H.R. 12993).

Kramer took a short leave of absence from the NCCB so that he could fight the

legislation that would have allowed broadcasters to hold their licenses in perpetuity.

The legislation was defeated. Kramer also prepared an *amicus curiae* brief for the U.S.

Supreme Court's consideration in the *Miami v. Tornillo* newspaper right of reply case.

In the *NBC v. FCC* case, he filed an *amicus curiae* to affirm the FCC's decision to

invoke the Fairness Doctrine for the NBC program *Pensions: The Broken Promise*.

The NCCB was also a party to other pleadings involving the Fairness Doctrine,

including one case in Maine that asked that contrasting views to advertisements for

snowmobiles be aired. In addition, the NCCB participated in 15 rulemakings at the

FCC.

Program Development

Johnson began to develop a more concrete program proposal for the NCCB

during summer 1974 (NCCB, 1975b). During Phase 1 of the new NCCB, the intention

had always been to conduct test marketing of the concepts outlined in the draft of the

program proposal written in May (NCCB, 1974f). Since the most pressing need of the

movement was for information, in July, the NCCB launched a test issue of *access*, a

magazine dedicated to media reform issues (NCCB, 1975d). If the first and two

subsequent issues (scheduled to come out in September and November) were well

received, the NCCB intended to begin biweekly publication of the magazine in

January 1975. Shepherd edited the test issues, and in a press release issued in

November, he said *access* would be neither a newsletter nor a house organ for the

NCCB. Instead *access* would be a professional journalistic project specializing in

news of importance to media reformers (Shepherd, 1974c). *access* would cover more

than just news about commercial broadcast reform; it would also carry news about

cable television access groups, the alternative video movement, journalism, listener-

supported stations, media education, and program production reform.

The first issue of *access* contained a long analysis of the license renewal

legislation that was pending in Congress (Shepherd, 1974c; NCCB, 1974g, 1975h). It

also contained a roundup of California citizen group activities; an *I Dissent* column by

Johnson; an article detailing the recently released programming data from the FCC

that ranked television station performances; a digest of media news from other

publications; a feature called *Current Docket*, which listed pending items before the

courts and the FCC; and a column called the *Screw of the Month*, describing absurd

incidents in the world of media reform. Although the format of the magazine would be

refined in the coming months, the first issue represented the content of future issues.

Research conducted during the first phase of the NCCB's operation clearly

indicated that there was a real need for the type of information that *access* could

provide (NCCB, 1974f). The issues were well received, and Johnson was named

publisher, Shepherd became the editor, and two other staff people were hired to work

on the magazine (NCCB, 1974e). Four student interns on academic leave were recruited to report, write, research, design, and layout for *access*. By mid-January, *access* was between a 24- and 32-page biweekly with a glossy cover. The magazine contained no advertising. Instead it was supported by grants from foundations; however, it was planned that subscription sales eventually would replace the grants. The test issues of *access* were provided gratis to approximately 1,000 organizations. As subscription revenue increased, Johnson hoped to increase the press run to 1,500 copies. With *access* off to a great start, Johnson turned his attention to several other projects also under development.

Another pilot program that the NCCB was working on was a project to rank stations in Ohio and Michigan according to their performances on several key issues (Johnson, 1974f). The primary concept of this project was to focus the public's attention on the performances of stations in their areas and to give them an opportunity to reward the best stations and reprimand the worst (NCCB, 1976c). The NCCB would gather detailed data so that the public could compare the performance of local stations to others statewide. Johnson hoped that citizens and activists would use the study to negotiate with broadcasters or challenge license renewals. Ohio and Michigan were selected for the pilot study because the renewal date for those states was not until October 1976, and giving the NCCB enough lead time to develop a comprehensive and detailed analysis. Johnson hoped that the mere existence of this program would influence station managers to improve their programming (Johnson, 1975d). If this project proved to be worthwhile, the NCCB would expand it to include station rankings for all 50 states.

Johnson still had not given up his original idea to send well-trained leaders to communities outside of Washington, DC (Johnson, 1974c). He proposed that the NCCB create a pilot program in California that would be similar to the Ohio/Michigan renewal project. The California project, like the Ohio/Michigan renewal project, would include broadcast station performance research, but it also would involve a more comprehensive organizing effort. Johnson wanted to capitalize on the creative community's concern over industry restrictions on their creative freedom, and he believed that independent producers and Craft Guild members could be organized to get involved with ascertainment issues.

Another program proposal that Johnson submitted to the board of directors was a project to propose that all broadcasting stations in the United States be required to devote no less than 1 hour a week of prime time to locally originated public affairs programming (Johnson, 1974g). In addition, the proposal called for each of the three major television networks to provide 1 hour a week of prime time public affairs programming, or if the network's affiliate did not choose to carry that hour, it would have to provide another hour of locally originated or syndicated public affairs programming (NCCB, 1976h). The purpose of this project was seen as twofold. First, if a widespread group of national and local groups would agree to endorse this proposal, it would result in a heightened awareness on the part of volunteer organizations, station management, Congress, FCC, press, and general public as to the importance of public affairs programming. Second, if successful, the project would increase the discussion of serious issues confronting the nation. The board of directors encouraged Johnson to go forward with both of these projects (NCCB, 1975r).

Another major initiative that Johnson proposed was to create a violence project that would not only address the concerns of a vast majority of the public but also involve members of the industry and independent research community (NCCB, 1975f). His idea was to apply George Gerbner's television violence research to rank programs and identify those programs with advertisers and sponsors (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000; NCCB, 1975f). The public would be encouraged to write sponsors and networks, boycott products, and develop local action programs. The college of criminal instruction project was closely related to the violence project. The concept was that the NCCB would identify explicit and repeated criminal acts that were portrayed on television and would call attention to these acts by labeling them as instructional.

Another major program that Johnson wanted to work on was one that would challenge the A. C. Neilsen television ratings system (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000; NCCB, 1975f, 1975j, 1976l). He wanted to develop an alternative system that would make a clear distinction between the passive demographic research orientation of the current system and one that would more accurately reflect the active values of audiences. The alternative NCCB ratings system would be based on academic research and would not include an in-house research component.

Johnson wanted the NCCB to build a broad and sizable membership and supporting constituency for the programs he proposed, one that would also provide financial support for the NCCB (NCCB, 1975f). He believed that the best way to accomplish this would be through direct mail drives and his own media campaigns,

including public lectures and traditional political campaign style strategies. The NCCB would need to identify potentially large donors and supporters who were sympathetic to the goals of the NCCB and to the media reform movement in general and to provide funding for the organization. Johnson also wanted to host an annual conference, allowing activists, researchers, and industry representatives to interact with each other and to develop creative solutions to public interest proposals.

Johnson suggested that a number of publication projects be undertaken to accomplish the goal of developing a coalition of media reform activists (NCCB, 1975f). One project would be to create a directory with contact information of national and local organizations. In addition to publishing *access*, Johnson wanted to publish an eight-page newsletter that would combine NCCB and media reform information for its members to encourage financial support and constituency building. He also hoped that this would help sustain the interest of members beyond those industry activists who would be reading *access*. He wanted to publish a *Best of access* edition that could be used as a workbook for teachers, students, activists, professionals, and libraries. He believed that the NCCB should produce a series of *how to* publications that would address how to deal with public service announcements, how to file a petition to deny, and how to interpret FCC procedures.

Policy Participation

Part of the mission of the NCCB would be to act jointly with other organizations on key rulemakings, legislation, and policy issues or legal cases that

were pertinent to the area of media reform. For example, during 1975, Johnson sent

Senator John O. Pastore a letter asking him to invite a list of public interest

organizations to testify before the Senate Communications Subcommittee during

hearings being held to debate the repeal of the Fairness Doctrine (NCCB, 1975h).

Never one to mince words, Johnson said that the broadcasting industry's efforts to

repeal the Fairness Doctrine would

> undermine and obliterate the very foundations upon which the
> American system of broadcasting has been built. Who but the
> broadcasters would have the brazen gall—not to mention unlimited
> political power to seriously come out with a flat-footed stand against
> being fair. (NCCB, 1975h, n.p.)

The May 19, 1975, edition of *access* reviewed the testimony of the industry during 3

days of debate (NCCB, 1975v). Johnson also wrote an eloquent defense of the

Fairness Doctrine in his biweekly *I Dissent* column in *access* (NCCB, 1975w).

Later that year, Johnson made public a press release concerning rumors that

President Gerald Ford was considering appointing former FCC Commissioner Robert

Wells for the position of director, Office of Telecommunications Policy (NCCB,

1975x). The NCCL sent an in-depth, 74-page study of Wells to Senator Pastore and

Senator MacDonald of the Senate Subcommittee on Communications and to Douglas

Bennett, director of the Presidential Personnel Office, based on a report originally

published in *access* (NCCB, 1975y). The press release and letter stated that the NCCB

and NCCL raised serious questions about Wells's qualifications to head the Office of

Telecommunications Policy (NCCB, 1975i). The most important issue raised by the

NCCB was circumstantial evidence surrounding Commissioner Wells's sale and

repurchase of Harris Group stock suggesting that he may have violated the law

prohibiting commissioners from being financially interested in regulated companies.

Another concern was that, as a commissioner and lifetime broadcaster, Wells's voting

record showed "a distinct bias in favor of the broadcasting industry and therefore his

ability to remain unbiased was in question" (NCCB, 1975y, p. 4). The report also

raised questions about Wells's commitment to equal opportunity rules, stating that the

record of the Harris Group, when he had owned and managed it, had an extremely

poor record in this regard. By October, President Ford withdrew Wells's name for

consideration (NCCB, 1975u).

The NCCB and a number of other media groups also were involved in protests

involving the nomination of Joseph Coors to the board of the CPB (NCCB, 1975f).

Largely because of public pressure, separate hearings were held for Coors. The Coors

nomination was opposed for a number of reasons, including Coors's conflict of

interest as the owner of a competitive television news network (TVN), charges

brought against his company by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and

the FTC, and his past record of using the media to serve his own ideological ends—

including an effort to prevent the showing of a public broadcasting program before he

was appointed. Eventually Coors withdrew his name from consideration (Johnson,

1975l).

The NCCB also testified before the Senate Communications Subcommittee

regarding the overall composition of President Ford's nominations to the board of

directors of PBS saying that more diversity was needed on the board (Johnson,

1975d). In another incident, the NCCB, the National Black Media Coalition, and

NOW attended the first meeting of the CPB with its new members and asked that the

meeting be opened to the public. After spending several hours in the hall outside of the meeting room, they were finally allowed into the meeting, and the board voted to move towards making all of their meetings public (Johnson, 1975o).

After its first full year of operation, the NCCB had already established an impressive record of accomplishments. The NCCB began the year by conducting extensive research that confirmed the need for a national umbrella organization for the media reform movement. The NCCB had represented reformers before the FCC and Congress, it had begun its publication program, and it had established general objectives for its program proposals. By the beginning of 1975, the NCCB was poised to focus on the specific strategies it would use to achieve its general goals.

CHAPTER 5

DEVELOPING THE AGENDA

In February 1975, Johnson submitted *The Citizen's Communications Reform Movement: A Report and Proposal* to the board of directors for review (NCCB, 1975e, 1975z). By this time, seven issues of *access* had been published, and two more student interns were hired to work on the magazine. The NCCB was requesting $75,000 in foundation support for *access* to get it off the ground before subscription revenue came in. The magazine cost approximately $1 an issue to print and mail, and Johnson projected the first year's cost to be from $70,000 to $80,000. Johnson was operating under the assumption that they could obtain from $5,000 to $20,000 in subscription revenue from 250 to 1,000 subscribers, with the NCCB continuing its policy of providing *access* at reduced rates to organizations that could not afford the $20 yearly subscription rate. With some foundational support for marketing, Johnson estimated that if circulation levels could be increased from 4,000 to 5,000 within 2 years, the magazine would become self-sustaining.

A second priority for Johnson that year was to get the NCCL off the ground (NCCB, 1975e, 1975m). Because of tax laws, the lobby had to be operated separately from the NCCB and *access*, with separate books, offices, and telephones. Johnson was seeking foundation support for this program, too. He believed that it was essential for

the media reform movement to create a regular presence in Congress. With all of the current resources of the NCCB going toward the publication of *access*, Johnson anticipated that the NCCL would be a modest undertaking for 1975. Johnson was not taking a salary from the NCCL, and he was planning to contribute his writing and speaking fees to it. He also planned to hire an assistant at his own expense to work exclusively for the lobby. Johnson wanted the NCCL to be a membership organization as well, and he was offering memberships at $15 for a year. His intention was to create a viable citizen's lobby along the lines of Common Cause or Ralph Nader's Congress Watch. Johnson estimated that he would need $75,000 for the NCCL in 1975 to fund a staff of three and to pay for office space, travel expenses, and printing of a newsletter that would be mailed to its members. The NCCL was a key component to Johnson's overall strategy to reform the media, and he invested considerable personal energy into the project.

Johnson's program proposal suggested that with the appropriate funding the NCCB would create the National Citizens Communication Organization (NCCO) (NCCB, 1975e). The NCCO would essentially assume all of the original responsibilities outlined in previous draft proposals for the NCCB. Johnson said that the small staff of NCCB was committed to publishing *access* and could not assume the responsibility for other projects as well. In order to make progress towards their programming goals, they would need to raise money to hire an executive director and two additional staff members and to fund travel allowances and office space. Johnson said he needed an additional $70,000 for the 12-month period between 1975 and 1976.

The second annual meeting of the board of directors was held on April 2, 1975,

in New York City (NCCB, 1975o). Johnson presented a report that outlined the

activities of the NCCB during its first year of operation (NCCB, 1975d). He also

submitted the final draft of the foundation proposal (NCCB, 1975c). The board

unanimously approved the agenda laid out in the proposal and agreed that it was now

time to secure funding for the organization. The board expressed confidence in

Johnson and his staff and decided to meet in June and monthly thereafter.

At the June meeting, Johnson passed out two *access* promotional summaries

and discussed plans for future issues (NCCB, 1975n, 1975p, 1975q). Johnson and

Kramer said that initial feedback from the Rockefeller Family Fund was positive, but

the consensus was that there needed to be more concrete programming goals apart

from *access*. They decided that the NCCO concept was confusing and needed to be

dropped entirely.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to structuring the board. Benton

believed that a strong 15 to 20 member board would be effective (NCCB, 1975p). A

board that size could be used for fund-raising, organizational tasks, direct-mail advice,

and constituency building. He called for quarterly meetings. Although the board would

not run the organization, he said it would add "the four w's—wealth, wisdom, work,

and weight" (NCCB, 1975p, p. 4).

The existing board of directors met again in July, September, October,

November, and December (NCCB, 1975p, 1975r, 1975s, 1975t, 1975u). During these

meetings, there were lengthy discussions about how to structure the board and who

they would select to serve on it. Johnson prepared a summary of his thoughts on the

matter for the July 15 meeting (Johnson, 1975p, 1975q). He proposed that a list of 100 individuals be sent letters inviting them to serve on the board. In an early display of political correctness, Johnson explained that the list of names he was submitting was carefully chosen to create a balanced representation of men, women, minorities, young people, older people, labor and management, celebrities, media reform workers, geographical regions, religions, and political parties. The list excluded foundation executives, donors, or others who might have potential conflict of interest, such as those with ties to commercial broadcasting. The list was well received, but no definitive action was taken. Throughout the rest of the year, the existing board members agreed that either an advisory board or expanded board of directors was required, but very little action was taken.

Although the board of directors offered valuable advice, assistance, and occasional directives, they basically ratified most of the proposals that Johnson and his staff submitted to them. At the October meeting, Johnson submitted a projected income statement for the period from July 1, 1975, to June 30, 1976, of $80,000, with an additional $55,000 in pledged income from the Rockefeller Family Fund, Veatch Foundation, and Levinson Foundation (NCCB, 1975t, 1976a). Since the three foundations also had pledged to increase their grants provided that their initial donations could be matched by other donations, the projected income through June 1976 was raised to $233,547 by November. The grants were given to the NCCB with the understanding that the money would see the organization through its first 2 years of operation, and that after 2 years, the NCCB would be able to develop its membership base to become self-supporting.

In addition, the NCCB staff reported that they sent out direct-mail solicitations to the 16,000 members who were originally on the membership rolls of the old NCCB (NCCB, 1975u). They received a decent response from these mailings considering that the list had not been active for several years, but now that the programming plans were in place, they needed to conduct a large-scale membership drive. The board directed the staff to consider retaining the services of professional development consultants and suggested they meet with Roger Craver of Craver & Company (Craver & Company, 1976). After discussions with Craver & Company, the NCCB decided to have them conduct a more complete management and fund-raising audit.

Johnson hoped that the NCCB could be developed into a full-fledged institution that would eventually be able to stand on its own without him (Johnson, 1976b; N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). In order to build an institution, Johnson knew he would have to create a financial, administrative, and organizational base that would allow for a viable NCCB. Without a strong structural base, the NCCB would not be able to carry out its programs and make long-term plans. Although Johnson provided the vision and foresight that carried the new NCCB through its first full year of operation, his philosophy was such that he believed that excellent leadership depended on recruiting intelligent, creative, and motivated people to carry out his long-term goals and then giving them the authority to carry out their responsibilities on their own. Johnson was a tireless crusader for the broadcast reform movement, but he had no interest or proclivity for running the day-to-day operations of the NCCB. The NCCB was sorely in need of an executive director. After receiving more than 150 applications, Johnson hired Ted Carpenter (Johnson, 1975g, 1975h,

1976a).

Carpenter was the founder of Broadside Video, a Tennessee-based

organization that produced public affairs and educational programming for CATV

stations (NCCB, 1975j, 1975s). Carpenter was an able administrator, and he

immediately compiled a list of priorities for the NCCB (Carpenter, 1976c). A 1- and

2-year fund-raising plan, including funding for special projects, was his first priority.

According to Carpenter's assessment, he also needed to focus on staff and

organizational management issues that included hiring additional staff. Johnson also

needed more support staff for the NCCL. The board encouraged Carpenter to hire a

top-notch research assistant for Johnson immediately. There was also the matter of

creating a comprehensive direct-mail campaign for members, and long-term strategies

needed to be developed (Johnson, 1976b).

Johnson's total commitment to the NCCB was one of the strongest assets of

the organization. His style of speaking and writing was so persuasive that his staff, the

public, and many foundations were willing to trust him with their money, faith, and

energy. By the end of 1975, he developed his vision for the NCCB into a workable

program of action (NCCB, 1975f). He had a dedicated and extremely competent staff

in place, a consortium of foundations that were willing to fund his programs through

1977, and a growing coalition of local organizations that were responding to the

proposals of the NCCB. For the next 2 years, Johnson traveled extensively and spoke

to the press and public at every opportunity, and he began to do regular weekly

commentaries on performance media for *All Things Considered*, an NPR produced

and distributed program (Johnson, 1975k, 1975l). With a strong executive director in

place, the NCCB was well positioned to execute its programs and to carry out the

objectives for which the organization was founded (Johnson, 1975n).

The Programs

All of the research and planning conducted over the past year and a half began

to pay off for the NCCB. Carpenter coordinated the administrative end of the

organization and hired additional staff members and student interns to carry out

Johnson's program proposals. *access* was well regarded, and its subscriber base was

increasing, the NCCB continued to address policy issues for the movement, and

Johnson continued to travel extensively, speaking out about citizens' rights in

broadcasting (Johnson, 1976a).

The Ohio/Michigan Television Station
Performance and Ranking Project

One of Johnson's early goals was to devise a system for evaluating

broadcasters' public interest commitments (Johnson, 1973c). The Ohio/Michigan

television station performance and ranking project (hereafter referred to as the

Ohio/Michigan project) was designed as a pilot program to determine if it would be

beneficial to conduct a nationwide study that would rank stations according to

information they were required to file with the FCC (NCCB, 1976c, 1976g, 1976h). In

1973, while Johnson was still an FCC commissioner, he prepared *Broadcasting in*

America, a report that compiled data from the 50 largest television markets in the country and evaluated station performance based on the amount and type of programming the stations carried (Johnson, 1975b). The Ohio/Michigan project used similar methodology to produce a report, providing communities with comparative data that could be used to negotiate with stations when their licenses came up for renewal (Johnson, 1975b; NCCB, 1976c). Johnson said the study was an attempt to rectify the FCC's failure to establish minimum criteria for evaluating a broadcaster's performance when determining if the public interest was being met. The programming information was compiled by three interns working at the NCCB. NOW's Media Task Force Coordinator Kathy Bonk assisted with a section that analyzed each station's employment records.

In the introduction to *Ohio/Michigan Television Station Performance: An Analysis and Ranking*, Johnson stated that there were limitations to creating an analysis based on quantitative data only (NCCB, 1976c). For example, a station might choose to produce less local programming yet devote more of its resources to those programs it did produce. In that case, Johnson suggested that a station manager might want to ask if the programs that were aired ran during prime time or if they had garnered high ratings. Other factors indicating high-quality programming would be whether a program had received an award or other critical acclaim or had received endorsements from community leaders. Although there was a sizable gap in the financial resources of some of the stations surveyed, Johnson said that high-quality programming did not necessarily depend on spending large amounts of money and that even the smallest stations could afford to produce public service announcements.

The report ranked the stations in several different categories and then gave each station an overall ranking (NCCB, 1975l, 1976c). Johnson believed that a station's performance could be at least partially assessed by measuring the total number of hours of news, public affairs, and "other" programming in a composite week.[1] The NCCB compiled these statistics and broke them down into total amount of programming devoted to news, total amount of programming time devoted to prime time news,[2] total amount of time devoted to public affairs programming, total amount of time devoted to prime time public affairs programming, and total amount of time devoted to other programming. The report also compiled minority employment statistics and the average amount of commercials aired during prime time hours.

The results of this study showed that many stations in Ohio and Michigan were in fact meeting the FCC requirement that at least 10% of their total programming hours be devoted to news or public affairs. However, most of those stations were not airing public affairs programs during prime time when audiences were largest, and many stations were not even meeting these minimum standards (NCCB, 1976c).

The study also found that some stations in both states were running from 12 to 15 minutes of commercials during prime time (NCCB, 1976c). Only three stations in Ohio and Michigan matched the national percentage of minority population employed

---

[1]The FCC defined "other" as "all other programs which are not intended primarily as entertainment and do not include play-by-play and pre- or postgames related activities and separate programs of sports instruction, news, or information. This category includes agricultural, religious, and instructional programming" (p. 6).

[2]Prime time is from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. (Eastern standard time and Pacific standard time) and from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. (Central standard time and Mountain standard time).

in high-paying positions, which was 18%. In all, only 9% of the high-level

employment positions in Ohio and Michigan were filled by minorities. The average

Ohio station's work force was only 25% female, and only 10% of those women held

high-paying positions. The figures were similar in Michigan.

When the report was released to the public, predictably broadcasters argued

that it was "birdseed" ("WKEF Rapped Hard in Panel," 1975, p. 50) (Johnson, 1975c).

The most beneficial result of the report was that broadcasters began to improve their

performances and employment records without having to be directly confronted with

petitions to deny. Ultimately the NCCB decided that this type of research was too time

consuming and costly to undertake on a nationwide basis (NCCB, 1977j). Instead it

focused its efforts on California, a state where activists had already won substantial

concessions from broadcasters.

The Public Affairs Project

The goal of the public affairs project was to create a diverse coalition of

interested parties who would be willing to support the NCCB's petition to the FCC

requiring broadcasters to produce a minimal number of public affairs programs each

week (NCCB, 1975g, 1975k, 1976o). Since a recent survey indicated that a sizable

segment of the American population considered television to be their primary source

of news and information, Johnson reasoned that broadcasters had an obligation to

encourage and maintain an informed electorate deemed essential for a Democratic

form of government.

As of March 1975, the FCC was considering establishing a 3% minimum

standard for prime time public affairs programming as a criterion for measuring a

station's performance at renewal time (NCCB, 1976o, p. 2). The 3% standard would

average out to just more than 1 hour a week of public affairs programming. The

NCCB agreed that this standard should be applied to all independent and nonnetwork-

affiliated stations, but it also called for network-affiliated stations to provide 1 hour of

locally produced prime time public affairs programming each week. In addition, the

NCCB proposal called for another hour of prime time public affairs programming to

be produced by the networks that would be carried by their affiliates.

The NCCB defined public affairs programming the same way the FCC did[3]

(NCCB, 1976o, 1976p). The NCCB further defined public affairs programming as a

discussion of issues where possible solutions to current problems are proposed

compared to news that is merely the presentation of facts. According to FCC research

compiled by the NCCB, the average amount of public affairs programming *and* news

that was broadcast by group-owned affiliates in 1971 was 55 minutes per week.

Single-owner affiliates broadcast an average of 68 minutes of this type of

programming per week, network owned and operated stations carried 88 minutes of

news and public affairs programming per week, group nonnetwork-affiliated stations

averaged 213 minutes per week, and single-owner independent stations carried 52

minutes of news and public affairs programming per week. While these statistics

indicated that some stations were carrying an adequate number of programs that

---

[3]"Public affairs programs include talks, commentaries, discussions, speeches, editorials, political programs, documentaries, forums, panels, round tables, and similar programs which deal with: 1) local community problems or 2) other problems of concern to the general public which are local, state, national, or international in scope" (NCCB, 1976o, p. 3).

included news or public affairs programming, many stations did not meet the NCCB's criteria.

The NCCB public affairs project stated that the FCC had attempted to provide a vehicle for stations to offer this type of programming through its prime time access rule (NCCB, 1976o). When the FCC instituted this rule, it stated that it expected local stations to devote an appropriate portion of their access time to material that was directed to the needs and problems of their respective communities and service areas, including the needs of minority groups (NCCB, 1976o p. 4). This rule also exempted networks from the 3-hour prime time programming limit, thereby giving them an incentive to produce their own public affairs programming. The problem, as the NCCB saw it, was that broadcasters were not conforming to the FCC's directives and the FCC was not enforcing its own policies. The NCCB saw this as a violation of the First Amendment, reasoning that a citizen's right to be informed is as fundamental as the right to free expression itself.

The proposal questioned the veracity of broadcasters who argued that public affairs programs are unprofitable, saying that if all stations were required to carry these programs, no single station would be placed at a competitive disadvantage; therefore, it would be likely that all public affairs programs would be aired during the same time period (NCCB, 1976b, 1976n, 1976o). Furthermore, the NCCB cited the CBS program *60 Minutes* as an example of a program that drew higher ratings than entertainment programming aired during the same time period. In any case, the NCCB argued that the issue of whether or not production of public affairs programming imposed a financial burden on a station was a moot argument; the primary issue was

whether or not a licensee was fulfilling its public service obligations.

The NCCB was able to gain endorsements for the proposal from a diverse number of national and local organizations ranging from media reform groups and consumer groups to political and educational groups (NCCB, 1976d). The proposal was endorsed by members of Congress (20 Democrats and 1 Republican, Senator Jeffries from Vermont) (Chisholm, 1976). Donald H. McGannon, president and chair of the board of directors at the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, also endorsed the proposal (McGannon, 1976). By the time the proposal was submitted to FCC Chair Richard Wiley, more than 100 media reform and political and educational groups had endorsed it. The proposal was covered widely in the press. If one of the goals of the project had been to raise the level of public awareness on the issue, the NCCB was successful in doing so (NCCB, 1976d).

The Ratings Project

When the NCCB was in the process of conducting the background research for its program proposals, many of the people and organizations contacted expressed dissatisfaction with the system that was used to rate television programming (NCCB, 1974f). Many suggested that the NCCB should try to develop an alternative to the methodology used by the Nielsen ratings, and the ratings project explored the possibilities of doing just that. According to Johnson, broadcasters often used the Nielsen ratings to imply critical approval or a favorable judgment on the part of an audience, but what the ratings were really measuring was whether or not a television set was turned on (NCCB, 1976p). Johnson believed that it would be useful to

determine if people actually liked what they were watching because he believed that people often ended up watching a program because "it was the only thing on" (NCCB, 1976p, p. 3).

If the NCCB could develop a methodology that could measure how much the audience liked a program in contrast to just watching a given program because there was a limited number of choices, Johnson speculated that such a system could become an instrument for the public and advertisers to use to bring pressure on broadcasters to produce more quality programming (NCCB, 1976p). Johnson obtained a grant to develop a model for the project from the J. M. Kaplan Fund. The alternative rating system would have to incorporate a statistical sample that was comparable to the one that Nielsen used, and it would have to be implemented on a regular basis. Johnson hoped that a model could be tested during prime time programming. If the model proved to be successful, he would consider the possibility of syndicating the rating service to newspapers and other outlets in an attempt to make the rating system publicly available and financially independent.

Although the concept for this type of rating system has potential, many problems needed to be overcome if such a methodology could be developed (NCCB, 1976p; Cambridge Research Company, 1976). One of the main reasons why broadcasters and advertisers relied so heavily on the data that Nielsen produced was that it was relatively cheap and easy to produce. Nielsen relied primarily on demographic information to choose a statistical sample and readily obtainable information. It was easy enough to design devices that recorded whether or not a given television set was turned on. Even if these data were limited, at least the methodology

was proven and replicable. The error-and-response bias was small with Nielsen's methodology. Despite the fact that the underlying assumption in Nielsen's research that people will watch the programs they disliked the least, it was enough to satisfy advertisers who merely wanted to reach a mass audience. Any research that the NCCB conducted or sponsored would have to be economical, reasonably immune to response bias and errors, and consistently replicable.

Realizing that this project would be beyond the capabilities of its current staff, the NCCB asked the Cambridge Research Company to submit a proposal that would meet the goals of the ratings project (NCCB, 1976e, 1976p; Cambridge Research Company, 1976). The company proposed several options. One option was to conduct a national survey on a one-time basis that would use respondents' diaries for a single week and would include a number of evaluative questions in the diary. In Cambridge's judgment, it would be impractical to conduct a study like this every week, but it would be one way to provide direct and interesting commentary on a week's worth of programming. Cambridge said it would take them approximately 8 weeks to design a questionnaire, conduct interviews with 1,500 people, process data, and provide an analysis at a cost of approximately $38,000. A second alternative that Cambridge believed was a good option was to use telephone surveys to test audience reactions to a specific number of highly rated programs. In order to avoid interrupting the viewer, a national telephone bank would be employed to call viewers immediately following the conclusion of a program. They suggested that questions asking viewers to recall which advertisements they had just seen might be useful information to collect with this type of survey. It would take them approximately 6 weeks to design a

questionnaire for a national sample that would evaluate 10 to 15 programs and to

conduct the research and analysis. This option would include 3,000 interviews, and it

would cost approximately $30,000.

Option three would be to try to duplicate on both pure audience and attitudinal

levels the local figures for a typical program week in one test market (Cambridge

Research Company, 1976). This option would require 1,100 interviews, and it would

take about 6 weeks to design questionnaires, conduct interviews, and complete data

processing and analysis. Cambridge suggested that it might be useful to test two or all

three of the options to learn what the strengths and weaknesses of each option were.

They also recommended that an independent evaluation by a panel of academics or

other communications experts be considered. Needless to say, all of the above options

were too expensive for the NCCB to consider. Another approach to the problem of

creating a qualitative television ratings service would have to be designed. The ratings

project was put on hold for the time being, and the NCCB concentrated on the

violence project instead (NCCB, 1976j).

The Violence Project

The people whom the NCCB contacted while conducting the research that led

to its initial programming plan expressed their extreme displeasure over the amount of

violence that was being broadcast on television (NCCB, 1976e, 1976f, 1976k,

1976m). Many NCCB members expressed the same sentiments, and a large segment

of society was also concerned about this issue (NCCB, 1977b, 1977p). Johnson had

heard about the work that George Gerbner was doing at The Annenburg School at the

University of Pennsylvania, and he also had read Gerbner's original study on television violence prepared for the surgeon general's report (NCCB, 1976k; N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). Johnson wanted to see if Gerbner's research could be used to produce a violence index or profile for television programs based on the same methodology that Gerbner had used (NCCB, 1976q). Gerbner was widely regarded to be one of the top researchers in his field, and Johnson was sure that Gerbner's reputation would lend credibility to any project dealing with television violence. Although Gerbner's studies involved in-depth, off-the-air analysis from videotaped material, two of Gerbner's associates, Nancy Signorielli and Michael F. Eleey, believed that they could adapt Gerbner's design for the needs of the NCCB, and they agreed to become consultants for the project (NCCB, 1976m).

Johnson had also heard about a firm that was paid by the industry to confirm that a sponsor's commercials were being run when they were supposed to be run (NCCB, 1976m; N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). BI Associates had people watching television and then compiling the data into computers that organized the information for its clients. Johnson figured that the people who were being paid to watch commercials were probably "bored out of their gourds" since they were forced to watch the regular programming when they were not monitoring commercials. He contacted BI Associates, a firm that had an excellent reputation from within the broadcast industry itself, and found that they were open to his idea of training their monitors to record incidents of violence on network programming. Johnson knew that a study like this would be worthwhile for its own sake, but he believed the key to the effectiveness of the project would be to identify the advertisers

who were sponsoring the most violent programs. He reasoned that if companies were

paying enormous sums of money to advertise their products on television, they would

not want their products to be associated with violence.

Johnson knew that if a violence index could be developed, the project would

serve several of NCCB's goals (NCCB, 1976e, 1976f, 1977d). He believed that a

study of this type would strike a responsive chord with the public (N. Johnson,

personal communication, December 22, 2001). He had worked on the Eisenhower

Commission on Violence. He believed that violence in society was a real problem, and

he was not alone in his conclusion that the media were clearly contributing to it in

some way. The American Medical Association (1976) and the president of the

American Academy of Child Psychiatry (1976) issued statements that year expressing

their concerns with the amount of violence broadcast on television. The National

Parents and Teachers Association (PTA) was planning to launch a massive program to

determine the effects of television violence on television and youth, with hearings on

the subject scheduled for November (National Parents and Teachers Association,

1976). If the research the violence project produced was credible and if it was

conducted independently from the NCCB, Johnson was convinced that it would call

attention to the media reform movement in general and the NCCB in particular

(NCCB, 1976l). He also hoped the project would help build the substantial

membership base that the organization needed in order to survive without foundation

grants (NCCB, 1976q). This project could also function as a consciousness-raising

device for people who did not often consider how violent programming might be

affecting the people who watched it. By linking the violence profile to the advertisers,

people who had an objection to that type of programming could elect to turn off the programs, write to the sponsors and networks, boycott products, or develop local action programs. If the first test study went well, Johnson hoped it would become an ongoing program. Johnson also believed that this type of information would be useful to advertisers and that they might even be willing to pay for it.

Johnson knew that in order to be credible the research design had to be meticulous and defensible from every angle (N. Johnson, personal interview, December 22, 2000). As members of Gerbner's staff, Signorielli and Eleey had been involved with the development of the research methodology for the cultural indicators project at Annenburg, and their reputations as researchers were solid (NCCB, 1976m). The fact that BI Associates used IBM computers to enter and analyze the data for their regular clients precluded the possibility that anyone could accuse Johnson of doctoring the numbers.

Signorielli and Eleey began to train six BI Associates monitors in June. The training was extensive and took place over a period of 2 weeks (NCCB, 1976m; Signorielli & Eleey, 1976). Signorielli and Eleey (1976) used Gerbner's definition of violence to train the monitors. Violence was defined as an overt expression of physical force against oneself or others or compelling action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed. An action that is considered violent has to be one that is plausible and credible, and it must involve human or human-like characters. An action can be an accidental action or intentional, humorous, or serious action, or a combination of both (NCCB, 1976l).

During the first week of training, Signorielli and Eleey (1976) provided taped

examples of televised violence as a training mechanism. The monitors collected data on site and off the air and compared them to the data that Signorielli and Eleey collected independently (NCCB, 1976l, 1976m). During the 2nd week of training, a full week's programming was viewed by the monitors and checked again for internal consistency. A report prepared by Signorielli and Eleey (1976) found internal agreement among BI Associates. BI Associates' monitors and the researchers ranked from 83% to 97% above any chance agreement that could be expected. External agreement on three broadcast procedures was at an acceptable level from 73% to 91% above chance, and external agreement was from 67% to 74% above chance when time of broadcast and *instant replay* observations were used. Signorielli and Eleey were satisfied that BI Associates' monitors were applying the violence measures in a consistent, systematic manner, but the monitors tended to identify slightly fewer violent actions than they and the other staff members of the cultural indicators project did. They recommended that the NCCB proceed with the study with periodic reevaluations of the monitoring system.

The pilot study was conducted over a 6-week period (NCCB, 1976l, 1976m). The data collected by the monitors were combined so that the number of violent incidents and the length of time of those incidents equaled a percentage of the total number of violent incidents and the total length of incidents in all prime time network programming. These figures were computed on the basis of an average week for the 6 weeks of the study. That total figure became the rating used to determine which sponsors were buying time on the most violent shows; then each program and each advertiser were given a ranking.

Johnson sent a letter to NCCB supporters asking them to attend a press

conference on July 29 at New York University where he would release the results of

the study (Johnson, 1976c). He also provided the press with a four-page release and a

packet of information that summarized and ranked the major prime time advertisers

based on the amount of violence they supported (NCCB, 1976f). The summary also

included rankings of programs and individual networks. Johnson predicted that the

report would "command serious attention among advertisers, broadcasters, and the

public" (NCCB, 1976f, p. 1). The NCCB was careful to point out that the study had its

limitations. Because it was a content analysis, it only measured the quantity of

television violence, and it did not attempt to offer any information about the subjective

aspects of violence such as quality, context, or whether or not the violence was

gratuitous to the story. Instead Johnson recommended that the study be weighed

carefully along with other contextual information. Johnson also pointed out that the

NCCB did not advocate or encourage any form of censorship.

> Just because we report that Tegrin shampoo is the largest sponsor of
> violence in our first study, it does not mean that Tegrin shampoo
> doesn't have the right to sponsor such network programming or that
> audiences can't view it—just like an X-rating for a movie does not
> keep anyone from producing or viewing one. (NCCB, 1976f, p. 3)

He also said that violence is often an essential element in drama, artistic expression, or

understanding of news and current events. He said that the NCCB would be

irresponsible if it were to issue a blanket statement of condemnation of all televised

violence. Johnson said that the purpose of the study was to inject into the marketplace

a more thorough understanding of how violence is supported on television and the

extent to which excessive or unnecessary violence could reflect on advertisers who

pay for it.

Johnson was correct when he predicted that the study would command attention. His strategy was a good one; after all, who would be willing to come out in support of violence? The violence index received widespread national press coverage in newspapers, magazines, and trade journals (Johnson, 1976d). Most of the coverage was favorable, and most publications agreed that the study's methodology was sound. However, the August 2 edition of *Broadcasting* reported that the NCCB's index drew immediate dismissive comments from all three networks who said the index was useless and meaningless ("NCCB Ties Together Advertisers and Violent Programs," 1976, p. 17). An editorial in the August 9 edition of *Advertising Age* stated that the study used too broad a definition of violence and that it ignored any context in which a violent act may have occurred ("A Program Worth Watching," 1976, p. 13). The editorial also objected to the NCCB's plan to sell the computer profiles to advertisers, agencies, and broadcasters for fees ranging from $100 to $2,000. The editorial said that the idea of a nonprofit organization designing, compiling, and selling a list like this raised the "sinister overtones of blacklist times" ("A Program Worth Watching," 1976, p. 13), and it also pointed out that one regional tire advertiser showed up on the list of least violent advertisers even though the NCCB said that only companies and products with at least three prime time network spots weekly would be on the list. The writers of the editorial concluded by saying that the NCCB needed to score higher marks on a cosmic credibility index, but they did say that the ensuing controversy would be worth watching, which they added was more than they could say about a lot of the shows that the committee was monitoring.

In a reply to the editorial, Johnson (1976e) took issue with the blacklist comment. He said that the index also listed the least violent programs and the sponsors who advertised on them. He mentioned that the Oscar Meyer Company had written the NCCB to thank them for the favorable press coverage they had received as a result of being listed as a sponsor who was among the least violent advertisers. Johnson pointed out that the index was available to the public at no charge and that the NCCB was only assessing a fee for the more detailed and expensive printouts of base data. He also announced that the NCCB was planning a symposium in September to call together broadcasters, advertisers, program producers, and researchers to determine if the methodology for the violence project could be improved.

The NCCB issued invitations to the all-day meeting to representatives from the broadcasting industry, advertisers, academicians, networks, and groups that were concerned about violence in television (Johnson, 1976d). The goal of the meeting was to provide a forum for all interested parties to evaluate the research methodology and provide input to the NCCB about the reporting process. The first session of the meeting reviewed the research and included the distribution of sample printouts of the violence data and information about the methodology used (NCCB, 1976r). During the second session, attendees were asked to provide feedback on whether or not the data formats were understandable and acceptable and whether or not they carried an acceptable impact in the view of their company, agency, or group. During the afternoon, there was also a group discussion of the violence definitions and ranking standards. In addition, the NCCB gave participants an opportunity to present prepared statements.

As a result of the feedback received at the meeting, the NCCB issued a memorandum stating that it would make some changes in the methodology used for its fall study (Carpenter, 1976d). Several participants at the conference had expressed concern that humorous violence and light violence, such as shoving and slapping, were included in the violence category and that those incidents were given the same weight as more serious violence. The NCCB stated that this issue was beyond consensus and that there were no strong arguments made that supported the contention that humorous or light violence was not harmful to viewers. On the other hand, there were many studies that indicated that humorous violence does have an impact. However, since the purpose of the project was to provide convincing evidence to advertisers, ad agencies, and networks, the NCCB decided to conduct a parallel study that segregated incidents of violence that could be characterized as overt, aggressive, and largely personal acts of violence.

The memorandum further stated that if there was a significant difference between the results of the two studies, then the NCCB would publish the rankings based only on the overt and aggressive acts of violence (Carpenter, 1976d). Both studies would be further refined to reflect some of the comments of the conference participants. The NCCB would no longer use program length as a factor for ranking. Henceforth, all future rankings would be based only on the number and length of each incident of violence rather than on the length of the entire program. In addition, natural disasters would be deleted from the overt, aggressive, and violence ranking. The NCCB agreed that when an act of coercion occurred it would be counted only when the act was shown and completed rather than counting it when the action moved

to other scenes.

The American Medical Association provided the NCCB with a grant for its 13-week study of fall programming and continued its support of the violence project through the end of the following year. American Medical Association Executive Vice President James H. Ammons said, "This action represents a strong commitment by the American Medical Association to endorse and finance activities that will encourage the industry to reduce the amount of violence in TV programming" (American Medical Association, 1976, p. 4). The results of both parallel studies were essentially the same; consequently, the NCCB planned to use Gerbner's definitions exclusively in all future studies (NCCB, 1976s).

When the president of the Association of Advertisers objected to the approach that the NCCB and other groups were taking, saying that it was not fair for those groups to use their economic muscle to pressure advertisers, Johnson responded by saying that economic muscle is what the industry is all about, and consumers had the same rights that the industry had. After the fall study was released on December 16, William Rubens, vice president for research and corporate planning for NBC, must have felt sufficiently pressured by the violence profiles that he prepared a status report describing recent developments involving violence on television for network executives at NBC (Rubens, 1977).

Rubens's (1977) report offered valid critiques of media effects research, saying that no cause and effect between televised violence and actual violence had been proven. Rubens correctly assessed the ethical problems that would result from the inducement of personal violence in a controlled study in a natural environment. In his

opinion, most of the studies that simulated aggression or violent behavior had a limited value because they took place in laboratories with questionable methodology employed. The few studies showed a correlation between televised violence and aggressive behavior violence, and they were ambiguous. Nonetheless, Rubens said NBC's broadcast standards department had attempted to strike a balance between avoiding depictions of excessive or gratuitous violence and allowing reasonable realism and conflict in drama. According to Rubens, the broadcast standards department analyzed all entertainment programming carefully at each stage of the production process (from concept to the finished project). He lamented the fact that the studies conducted in-house at NBC were not generally acknowledged when critics of television designed their own studies.

Rubens (1977) attempted to refute the findings of the NCCB, although he conceded that most of the problems with the methodology had been adjusted following the initial pilot project. He continued to assert that the rankings provided by the NCCB were seriously flawed because they did not provide qualitative information about the programming content—the same problem that Gerbner's studies had failed to solve. Since the violence profiles did not contain information that was necessary for the evaluation of the psychological meaning of violent acts for viewers, "it is not helpful in assessing the extent to which the programming may be harmful for viewers" (Rubens, 1977, p. 10).

Despite the network's attempt to avoid the issue, other parties were addressing it. The J. Walter Thompson advertising agency, the country's largest, announced that it was conducting research into the question of whether or not violent programming

affected consumers' attitudes toward products advertised during these shows (NCCB, 1977t). Representatives from the agency said that sponsoring violent programming was a poor business decision. A representative from the Jaycees was writing sponsors who were highly ranked on the NCCB summer study. The International Society of Chiefs of Police issued a strongly worded statement, along with the Communications Workers of America, that asked the networks to reduce violent programming (International Society of Chiefs of Police, 1977; Johnson, 1976c). Copies of the statement were sent to 12 advertisers on the NCCB's list, and private citizens were writing advertisers. A coalition of church groups who held stock in major corporations was using the list to take appropriate stockholder actions.

Critics, academicians, and government commissions had been studying the issue of violence in mass media in the 1920s, but Johnson's strategy to reduce violent television programming was producing results (Johnson, 1977a). As Johnson had hoped, the public's consciousness was being raised. By January 1977, advertisers were joining the antiviolence movement as well. Archa O. Knowlton, director of media service for General Foods, the third largest television advertiser, condemned the networks for violent programming and said that his company was rethinking its advertising policies ("The Clamor Against TV Violence Gets Results," 1977). Donald H. McGannon, president of the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, refused to carry CBS's broadcast of *Death Wish*, a particularly violent movie, on any of its stations. The NAB was compelled to schedule a series of meetings with the presidents of all three networks and its own standards and practices committee to discuss the NCCB's index and the public's reaction to it in early January ("NCCB Ties Together

Advertisers and Violent Programs," 1976). The headline in *Broadcasting* read: "Networks think it's for real as advertisers scramble for antiviolence bandwagon: It's apparent things are going to change, and fast; sex may be next" ("NCCB Ties Together Advertisers and Violent Programs," 1976, p. 29). When Ann Landers published a nationally syndicated column on the NCCB violence profiles, the NCCB received more than 13,000 requests for more information (Johnson, 1976a). Senator Van Deerlin scheduled hearings with the Senate Subcommittee on Communications to discuss the issue. More than 500 citizens and 60 witnesses appeared at the PTA's hearing on television and violence in Portland, Oregon.

Johnson traveled extensively during this period, speaking to citizen groups, appearing on television, and talking to university students (Johnson, 1977g). The violence project kept pressure on the networks, and advertisers were exerting their influence as well. *Broadcasting* ("NCCB Ties Together Advertisers and Violent Programs," 1976) reported that "a rising chorus of advertisers publicly disassociating themselves from 'violent' television programming in the last few weeks finds many broadcasters apparently convinced it will lead to much less TV violence" (p. 29). The article quoted sources at all three networks who said that there was "some activity" among advertisers who were removing their advertisements from certain programs. The American Medical Association announced that it had asked 10 big companies to review their advertising policies, and Eastman Kodak, General Motors, and Sears and Roebuck & Co. announced they were doing so. Proctor and Gamble, Burger King, and the American Motor Corporation issued statements saying they would strengthen their existing policies that shied away from violent programming.

The *Washington Post* reported that the networks were reacting to the NCCB studies (Shales, 1977). The headline was: "Networks are reacting to the increasing clamor for less televised mayhem." NBC-TV President Robert T. Howard issued a statement conceding that the proliferation of program types featuring violence has become excessive. Howard said NBC would avoid action programming during the next season and that nearly half of the new programs for the next season would be comedies or variety shows. President of ABC-TV Frederick S. Pierce flew to Hollywood to talk to producer Aaron Spelling about curtailing violence on his show. According to Spelling, an independent television producer, he said, "No more violence. Period. Period. Period" (Shales, 1977, p. B7). Networks also were hearing from their affiliates. ABC had trouble clearing *Nightmare in Badham County*, a movie described as lurid and violent by the *Washington Post*. WMAR-TV, a CBS affiliate, refused to carry *A Man Called Horse*, a particularly violent movie.

On March 1 the Annenburg School of Communications released Gerbner's new study that found that violence on network television had reached its highest level in 10 years. The study found that the number of violent incidents on television rose from 8% an hour in 1975 to 10% an hour in 1976. The study was released the day before the Senate subcommittee hearings were scheduled to begin, and Gerbner was on the agenda to present the findings of his research. All three network presidents were asked to testify, as was Carpenter who represented the NCCB (Shales, 1977).

In a prepared statement, Carpenter described the violence project and what the NCCB hoped to accomplish with it (Carpenter, 1977c). He stated that he did not believe it was a coincidence that 9 out of the 12 most violent advertisers on the

violence index had publicly announced their intentions to shift their advertising away

from televised violence. Carpenter also told the subcommittee that NBC had

announced that it would reduce the level of violence in its programming. Carpenter

also quoted Robert D. Lund, a vice president of General Motors, who said:

> The time is at hand when society is beginning to demand higher
> standards from many of its institutions. We've got to get beyond
> ratings, beyond market share, beyond pragmatism. Advertising today
> has the power to help shape the quality of life. Our strategies of
> communications must put a tremendous emphasis on both integrity and
> innovation. The creation of advertising is not an end in itself.
> (Carpenter, 1977c, p. 1)

Although Carpenter (1977c) was gratified that advertisers and networks were

responding to the pressure to reduce the amount of violence on television, he said that

the larger problem was the failure of television to live up to expectations. He asked

legislators to create regulatory policy that encouraged a diversity of services from

broadcasters in contrast to forcing consumers to flex their economic muscles each time

they felt that they were not being served well by network offerings. He concluded by

saying:

> Perhaps legislative and regulatory policy should not only consider the
> economic marketplace, but should protect, guarantee, and even
> stimulate a free marketplace of ideas, information, and programs
> between audiences and broadcasters as an essential element in this
> country's communication process. (Carpenter, 1977c, p. 2)

The *Wall Street Journal* reported in April that Proctor & Gamble pulled

advertisements from 15 series episodes over the past year and that General Motors

also pulled advertisements from 30 violent programs (Graham, 1977, p. 1). A

spokesman for Young & Rubicam, an advertising agency, said that because of the

uproar over television violence the networks were having a difficult time selling spots

on series ranked as violent by the NCCB. The article stated that it was clear that by

flexing their economic muscles opponents of TV violence had forced changes in the

content of television programming and that the feat was unprecedented. Johnson

(1977h) reported that the NCCB's violence project was the most successful program

in its history. Not only had it succeeded in raising consumer awareness on media

reform issues, but it had played a part in reducing the amount of violent incidents on

television. Commercial television had been publicly exposed for what it was, and

Johnson had been able to manipulate the same economic forces that produced

objectionable programming to show the public that they had the power to influence the

broadcast industry.

<u>The Membership Drive and Raising Funds</u>

By the time that Craver & Company (1976) presented its management and

fund-raising audit, the NCCB was committed to an operating budget of close to

$350,000 for the next fiscal year (NCCB, 1977j). Johnson believed that this funding

level was the minimum needed to carry out NCCB programs and activities. The

decision was made that large renewable grants of $75,000 and up would be sought

from the larger foundations once the NCCB had established a track record of

performance. It was equally important to develop a long-term fund-raising and

membership-building strategy, which is why the services of Craver & Company were

retained.

Craver & Company's (1976) report praised the staff and management for

establishing excellent organizational management, especially since Carpenter had

become executive director. However, the consultants concluded that the NCCB had

serious problems with regard to the development of its long-term mission and

programming goals (Craver & Company, 1976). A unified sense of purpose was

missing, and there was no conception of the steps that needed to be taken to

accomplish intermediate and long-term goals. Craver & Company reported that

without an agreement between the staff and management as to what the general and

long-term purposes of an organization were there was little chance to build a lasting

constituency. Although the NCCB's present financial base was solid, the consultants

predicted that it would erode if some longer-range development programs were not put

in place.

It was clear that fund-raising was not anyone's favorite job at the NCCB.

Shepherd was completely focused on the editorial content of *access* and preferred to

leave promotional and subscription renewal drives to other staff members (Shepherd,

1976a). Carpenter was doing his best to attend to the fiscal needs of the organization,

but most of his time was taken up with immediate management issues (Carpenter,

1976e). Although Johnson was an excellent spokesman and spent much of his time

preparing foundation proposals and communications to NCCB members designed to

solicit donations, he had yet to form the National Advisory Committee that would

assist in fund-raising efforts. Johnson's public appearances brought in members and

donations to the organization, but that was not enough to build the type of support that

the NCCB needed.

On the other hand, Johnson had been sending an *Insider's Newsletter* to

members and donors to the NCCB since 1974. The newsy letters contained

information about what was taking place within the organization. Craver & Company (1976) believed that these types of letters were an important component of a long-term strategy. It was recommended that the letters be expanded into a four-page monthly newsletter that would be mailed to all NCCB members and supporters as a membership benefit (Craver & Company, 1976). The first issue of *Media Watch* was completed and mailed in April, and it was very well received. Hence, *Media Watch* was added to the NCCB's growing publication list (NCCB, 1976t).

According to Craver & Company (1976), it was an established maxim in the fund-raising business that donors would not give funding to organizations unless they were assured that well thought out and articulated programs, with specific documented needs, were in place. In order to become successful at fund-raising, the NCCB needed to adopt a formal framework for approaching the process of goal selection with attention given to program requirements, funding sources, and the organization's realistic capacity to achieve those goals. The consultants suggested that the NCCB was attempting to spread itself too thin and that it needed to develop a clear list of priorities and stick to direct courses of action for each goal.

Craver & Company (1976) questioned the wisdom of including a lobbying arm in the NCCB. It was their assessment that the NCCL needed to raise substantial sums of money in order to be effective. At this stage in the NCCB's history, the best argument that could be made for not investing additional time and resources into the NCCL was based on financial reality. Since it was the goal of the NCCL to build a massive constituency, the only way to accomplish this was by conducting a massive direct-mail solicitation. There simply was not enough money to undertake a project

like this for both the NCCB and the NCCL. Craver & Company suggested that

Johnson concentrate his efforts on building a broad membership base for the NCCB,

and then at some later date a separate membership drive could be done for the more

specialized interests of the NCCL constituency. If the NCCB believed that the

lobbying arm of the organization was essential, the consultants recommended that they

concentrate on a few selected issues. The report advised the NCCB that few national

organizations could successfully support local chapters and that, therefore, the NCCB

should limit its local participation to just a few very special projects of limited

duration.

Craver & Company (1976) said that there was widespread agreement among

the staff that the board of directors should be expanded to provide outreach to the

broadcast industry, the business community, and those who represent the private

sector. If articulate leaders in their own area of expertise could be recruited, it would

not only increase the fund-raising ability of the NCCB, but it would also increase its

visibility. An expanded board also could be charged with determining the long-term

mission and goals of the NCCB. The report strongly recommended that more effort

needed to be focused on the development of new leadership to assist Johnson in his

responsibilities. Craver & Company (1976) also suggested that Johnson should

reevaluate his role in the day-to-day activities of the organization and that he should

spend his time developing long-range objectives and continuing his public speaking

and fund-raising efforts.

With regard to the development of long-term, fund-raising goals, the report

stated that "the best path toward long-term funding development lies in the area of

institutional goal setting, leadership development, and development of a more solid

case for support. Without these, the most sophisticated and hard-hitting techniques

generally prove ineffective" (Craver & Company, 1976, p. 8). That being said, the

NCCB needed to develop a direct-mail plan that would identify new prospects rather

than trying to get old members to renew their commitments. Craver & Company

suggested that an additional staff person be hired for this purpose. With solid planning

and a renewed sense of purpose, Craver & Company believed that it would be

reasonable to assume that a membership base of at least 10,000 could be developed

over the course of a 2- to 3-year period. A membership base of 10,000 would have a

substantial positive impact of the financial health of the NCCB, but it would also

require a substantial allocation of resources to be accomplished.

At the July meeting of the board of directors, it was decided that it was

important for the NCCB to invest its resources into the development of its membership

constituency (NCCB, 1976j). Johnson emphasized that it should be the intention of the

NCCB to raise citizen consciousness on the issue of media reform nationally and that

one way to do that would be through membership in the NCCB. The board decided to

prepare a plan for constituency-building and fund-raising to be presented at the

October board meeting. They also directed the staff to obtain a loan or grant for a

direct-mail campaign for constituency-building. Craver, who was at the meeting,

recommended that the mailing be directed toward cultivation of present donors for

resolicitation. Four people from the public interest community were accepted on to the

board, and it was agreed that an effort should be expanded to nominate more board

members who could be used for fund-raising purposes (NCCB, 1976i).

For the past 2_ years, Johnson had been working at a furious pace to create a national institution that would not only unite media reform activists but one that would raise the consciousness of the American public, letting them see the need to join the reform movement themselves (Johnson, 1977a). Johnson had successfully laid the foundation for the institution he envisioned, his programming proposals, personal appearances, and successful media campaigns, but by the beginning of the organization's 3rd fiscal year, much more was needed.

CHAPTER 6

DEVELOPING A CONSTITUENCY

By the 4th quarter of 1976, the NCCB was in financial trouble (Carpenter, 1976f). Carpenter sent a memorandum to the board in early October explaining the precarious financial situation of the organization. He began the report with the good news. He said he was delighted to report that the NCCB had achieved the major goals and objectives it had outlined for the past 2 years. He said there was a real sense of achievement on the part of the staff after surmounting the difficult, experimental period of the last 2 years. He also provided the board with a program statement prepared to justify a request for major foundation support. If the board approved, it would present the request to the Carnegie Corporation, Ford Foundation, and Lilly Endowment. The NCCB was asking for a $75,000 grant for January 1 and a continued 3-year commitment.

Then Carpenter (1976f) delivered the bad news. The NCCB had developed to the point where small foundation grants alone could not sustain it. When the decision was made to operate at a proposed budget level of $350,000, it was assumed that the private donor, member, and subscriber base to *access* would be more fully developed by the beginning of the 3rd fiscal year. However, private donor support had fallen far short of NCCB's projected goals. According to Carpenter (1976f), summer was

always a bad time for giving, and the current election season had siphoned off donations that the NCCB's constituency might have given to the organization. He also said that he and Johnson had been completely consumed by the success of the violence project and that they had been unable to give their full attention to fund-raising. As a result, by October 1, they had $26,000 in cash and $12,000 of current financial obligations. There was a reserve of $14,000 held in escrow to pay off *access* subscribers in the event that the NCCB had to cease publication.

Carpenter (1976f) went on to tell the board of directors that the American Medical Association was considering a $47,000 proposal to continue the violence project, with $22,000 of that allocated for general staff support. The Markle Foundation was being asked to grant the NCCB an additional $35,000 through the end of the year, and there was a proposal from the Benton Foundation for $35,000. Carpenter was so confident that these grants would materialize that he was asking five major donors to make additional pledges of $5,000 each to sustain the NCCB through its crisis. He planned to borrow money against the pledges until the foundation grants came through. Carpenter was certain he would not have to call in the pledges because there were several large foundation grant proposals in the works.

<u>Direct Mail</u>

Although the NCCB had conducted several test mailings to people who were on the old membership rolls, there were several reasons why a larger, more comprehensive direct-mail campaign had not been done, chief among them being the cost of committing to this type of program (NCCB, 1976u). Small mailings were

inefficient, but the NCCB did not have the resources for launching a large scale campaign. The NCCB also did not have the funds to hire professional copywriters and graphic designers to create a compelling package. During the July 1976 board meeting, the decision was made to obtain a loan for $7,500 to conduct an initial test mailing to potential members. The NCCB contracted with Craver & Company to establish an overall program and package focused on the violence project; 50,000 pieces were mailed during October. Sixteen different mailing lists were tested to determine if the names would bring returns. By early December, the campaign was averaging a 1% return, which allowed the NCCB to break even on the project (Smith, 1976). The average donation received from this mailing was between $13 and $20. Since the test mailing was so promising, Craver & Company recommended that an additional 200,000 packages be mailed in January and February.

Although the NCCB was able to weather its cash flow crisis due to a $35,000 grant from the Markle Foundation, it was becoming obvious that it could no longer afford to subsidize the publication of *access* in its present form (NCCB, 1976u). Consequently, Carpenter asked Shepherd to rethink the structure and format of the magazine (Carpenter, 1976a, 1976b). Although there were now 1,586 subscribers to *access* at $24 each, it was still operating at an annual deficit of $30,360 (Shepherd, 1976a). Shepherd (1976a) outlined alternatives in a memorandum that fall that said there was no foreseeable way that the current format of the magazine could be retained on less than an annual budget of from $90,000 to $95,000. In fact, he believed that he needed additional staff members to continue the same standards of editorial excellence that *access* was known for. Costs were rising, and the *access* staff could not be

expected to carry the overwhelming workload that they had in the past.

The only reasonable option for *access* at this point was to scale back to a once-a-month publication (Carpenter, 1976a). Scaling back *access* required a major revision of editorial goals. *access* would have to curtail its news coverage substantially and develop a new orientation toward content. Shepherd (1976a) said they could do more interviews and background pieces on regulatory issues, but he said more staff time would have to be spent on developing articles. He also believed that a monthly publication needed to give more attention to layout and presentation. Shepherd said more time would have to be spent on promotion. Shepherd's proposal was for a monthly journal consisting of 24 pages with upgraded printing and graphic design components. He said this version of the magazine should contain at least two 6- to 8-page articles per month on original provocative subjects, at least two 2- to 3-page articles a month, and one or two columns including Johnson's *I Dissent* and a *FCC Report* featuring regulatory decisions or proceedings. By the end of the year, Carpenter (1976c) decided to cut *access* back to a once a month, eight-page newsletter format. Shepherd decided to move on, but he agreed to stay on until the new format was established in January. His assistant editor, Ellie Koch, agreed to take over as editor, and the other staff members were terminated (NCCB, 1976u).

1977 Programs

By December, special program grants began to flow back into the NCCB, and the attention of the staff was again focused on its programs. The program plan for the upcoming year was largely a continuation of what had already been started. The

violence project would continue with another spring profile, the direct-mail program would be carried out in the months to come, and the second phase of the public affairs project was set to begin in Philadelphia.

Phase 2 of the public affairs project was designed to test the proposal, which by now had gained the endorsements of 125 groups and individuals in one city to determine if it could be translated into direct action (NCCB, 1976d). The concept was to detail all the steps taken to get a licensee to change a programming format that did not include the suggested hour of public affairs programming per week in prime time. One reason why Philadelphia was selected as a test market was because station KYW was there. This station was owned by the Westinghouse group, and the president of that company had endorsed the public affairs project. It was assumed that if KYW could be convinced to change its programming it would give them more leverage with other stations in the market (NCCB, 1976d).

The NCCB contacted representatives from a cross-section of community groups in Philadelphia, mailed them a copy of the proposal and a cover letter that explained what the NCCB wanted to do, and asked for their support (NCCB, 1976d). An initial discussion and strategy session was well attended. The idea was to pull together a coalition of local groups that would negotiate with local broadcasters to determine if they would adopt the public affairs project. The NCCB planned to function as a catalyst for action and as an advisor to the groups. If the project was successful, the staff hoped to publish an action handbook that would become a first in a series preliminarily called *Blueprints for Action*.

Another project that was being tied together was the citizens' *Media Directory*

(NCCB, 1976e, 1977c). The directory was already in final draft form, and the Playboy Foundation agreed to pay for printing. The 170-page paperback contained a detailed listing of local and national groups and organizations that were interested in the media reform movement. The information was categorized into sections that listed national media reform groups, state reform groups, video access centers, video production groups, alternative news services, and listener-supported community radio stations. The plan was to sell copies for $5 to university communications departments, libraries, *Media Watch* subscribers, television columnists, and other journalists.

Another program carried over from the previous year was called the college of criminal instruction (NCCB, 1977h, 1977i). Knowing that television was a powerful teaching tool, Johnson believed that it would be useful to examine what was being taught on prime-time network television. In October, the staff began to record criminal techniques that were being broadcast over the networks. Thus far, the monitors had learned that obituaries list funeral times (which come in handy if one is planning a robbery), that arson was a good way to cover up any clues that might be left when committing a murder, and that fire extinguishers make excellent weapons should the fire department show up while committing arson. The plan was to show that television was teaching people how to be criminals.

After the NCCB received a grant for this program, Vaughn A. Carney, a law professor from Howard University, and two of his students were enlisted to carry it out. Each network was monitored during 1 week of prime time during the period between February 28 and March 6, 1977 (NCCB, 1977h). A criminal act was recorded if it met the definition in the California Penal Code. In May, the NCCB issued a press

release that detailed the findings of the professor (Carpenter, 1977d). According to the

NCCB, NBC would have to go to prison for 1,485 years if the network was convicted

of every criminal act it portrayed during the week that was monitored. Johnson said

that this "makes them our candidate for graduation in the first degree from the TV

college of criminal instruction" (Carpenter, 1977d, p. 1). CBS received 1,085 years of

credit, and ABC earned 1,063 years. The press release urged the public to write to

their networks to ask them for credit hours themselves, being careful to provide

written evidence of any crime they saw on any given program.

The next large scale project that the NCCB hoped to complete in 1977 was the

California renewal project (Carpenter, 1977b; Johnson, 1977a). This project was an

outgrowth of the Ohio/Michigan license renewal program, which did have some

impact but not as much as was hoped. This time the NCCB planned to use the license

renewal process in California as a focal point for mobilizing the community to action.

In February, Johnson met with activists, including representatives from the National

Association for Better Broadcasting, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference-

West, the Committee for Children's Television, and the PTA. Many approaches were

suggested to the license renewal project (Johnson, 1977h, 1977i). A letter could be

sent to all station managers in the state putting them on notice that they were being

monitored. Some activists suggested that the ascertainment issue could become a

primary issue. Another suggestion was for the NCCB to hold a series of meetings

statewide with public service groups to provide them with the information they needed

to get involved with the ascertainment process. It also was suggested that the NCCB

could hold a press conference that would outline the criteria that the activists would be

using to evaluate local stations. The consensus was that the NCCB could help make a

difference in California if someone was there to help coordinate activities.

By April, the NCCB decided to publish a monthly calendar of actions, events,

and notices that would highlight what citizen groups were doing in various locations

throughout California. The idea was that this newsletter would facilitate the

coordination and interactions of activists who were working independently around the

state (NCCB, 1977k, 1977n, 1977p). The newsletter was mailed to 500 groups.

Johnson also made numerous trips to California to make speeches, give lectures, and

make media appearances to gain interest in the project. In 1977 alone, he traveled to

California nine times (Johnson, 1977b). He was interviewed by the *San Diego Union*,

San Diego Magazine, *Daily Variety*, and *Writers Guild*. He appeared on the *Evening

News* and the *Michael Jackson Show* on KABC-TV and on KNBC's *On Campus* in

Los Angeles. In San Diego, Johnson appeared on the *Evening News*, *You're On*, *The

Sun Up Show*, and *Viewpoints*. In San Francisco, Johnson made appearances on *AM

San Francisco*, *Noon News*, *Newsroom*, *I Believe*, and *Forum*, and then he went back

to Los Angles for appearances on four additional television shows before returning to

Washington, DC (Johnson, 1977h). Johnson also made numerous appearances on the

national media during this period in addition to doing his weekly commentary on *All

Things Considered*. All of his travel expenses were paid by the fees he earned from his

speeches. Following one trip to California, the NCCB received 3,700 requests for

more information about its programs (Johnson, 1977a).

Another program on the agenda for 1977 was the ratings project (NCCB,

1976p). After the Cambridge Survey Research Corporation's bid for the research was

rejected due to expense, Johnson was still interested in pursuing his idea of developing an alternative ratings system. When the Markle Foundation earmarked a special grant to fund the development of such a system, the NCCB hired a doctoral candidate from the University of Wisconsin, Harvey Jassem, to survey existing methodologies that were used to rate and evaluate audience responses in other than quantitative terms (Johnson, 1977i). Jassem worked with Rodney Gourney of the University of California at Los Angeles, who wrote a widely read study on the impact of antisocial and prosocial programming on adult viewers to determine if they could develop a pilot study. Gourney claimed that the methodology he used measured negative responses to violent or antisocial programming and that it also measured positive reactions to prosocial programming (Carpenter, 1977e, 1977f). By the end of the summer, Jassem moved on to other pursuits, but the NCCB was able to obtain an additional grant for $7,500 from General Foods for the project.

In July, Carpenter managed to convince the director of media services at General Foods to put up an additional $25,000 so work could continue on the ratings project until a matching grant was awarded from the Schultz Foundation in New Jersey (Carpenter, 1977e, 1977f). In exchange, the NCCB agreed to furnish General Foods with the results from the pilot study, which would not be released to the public. In addition, Carpenter was asking the American Medical Association for $25,000. In August, the NCCB hired Andre DeVerneil as director of research and publications. DeVerneil earned his doctorate in mass communications from Ohio University in Athens where he specialized in media effects and quantitative research methods.

Preliminary research to identify a series of questions or measurement standards

that could be tested on a sample base of viewers had already been conducted, but it was not finalized by September (NCCB, 1977q). By the end of November, DeVerneil, Gourney, Joseph Philport from the University of Maryland, and George Comstock from Syracuse University developed a qualitative rating index, which they were ready to test in the greater Washington, DC, metropolitan area (Johnson, 1977j). The test sample included 400 homes that had agreed to a request to keep a diary supplied by the NCCB to record their responses to television programs as indicated in the diary. They were asked to mail back the diaries by December 7, 1977. The cost of the project thus far had been about $4,500, but the cost for developing it into a full-fledged program would be about $128,000 (NCCB, 1977n, 1977r, 1977s, 1977t). The ratings were expected to earn substantial income through sales of the information to corporations.

Communications Policy: The Public Agenda

The NCCB sponsored a conference in June at the Airleigh House in Airleigh, Virginia (Johnson, 1977o; NCCB, 1977a). The purpose of the conference was to bring key leaders together in the field of public interest law and communications policy to discuss fundamental issues of communication policy from a public interest perspective. The conference was designed to be a continuation of the public interest law and communications conference hosted by the Aspen Institute during the previous year. Johnson, who was a participant at the first conference, believed that the significance of bringing key national communications leadership together went far beyond the agenda for the first gathering.

There were two reasons to focus on these issues at this time (NCCB, 1977a): (a) There would be a new administration in the White House, with major shifts in personnel and orientation of the executive branch relevant to communication issues, and (b) the House Subcommittee on Communications would have an agenda to begin a rewrite of the 1934 Communications Act.

The conference was funded by a grant from the Benton Foundation. Roland S. Homer, director of the Aspen Institute's communications program, assisted with the planning (NCCB, 1977a). The focus of the conference was educational, and it included a plan to publish the results of the discussion that also was funded by the Benton Foundation. The structure of the conference was focused on five areas of policy: (a) common carrier, (b) public broadcasting, (c) trusteeship, (d) minority issues, and (e) cable television. A chair person was assigned for each area of policy, and that person was responsible for establishing a task force within each policy area. There were four separate working sessions for each policy area; thus, any of the participants could attend several discussions. After the conference, the task force was to summarize its findings and write a position paper that outlined each of the group's conclusions. Additional open debates were scheduled during each meal break.

Participants at the conference included approximately 25 federal officials, 25 broadcast industry representatives, 35 communications lawyers, 20 minority representatives, and 50 public interest media reform activists (NCCB, 1977a). One of the conclusions of the conference was a strengthened conviction that commercial forces in the television industry must be tempered not only by public interest regulatory procedures but also by public participation and oversight. According to

Johnson, the conference was successful because it stimulated new thinking on the part

of participants (Johnson, 1977n). The NCCB intended to make this an annual event

(Johnson, 1977o).

Another positive outcome of the conference was that it influenced the NCCB's

programming plans (Carpenter, 1977a; NCCB, 1977c, 1977g). Johnson and Carpenter

began to explore new areas of program development. The most heavily attended

sessions of the conference were those that addressed public broadcasting. A summary

recommendation of the Public Broadcasting Task Force was provided to the White

House, the Senate Communications Subcommittee, and the new Carnegie Commission

on the Future of Public Broadcasting. Johnson and the Policy and Program

Development Committee of the NCCB board of directors decided to devote a

significant portion of the next 3 years on the growing debate over the future of public

broadcasting. The NCCB intended to make a substantial contribution to the public

participation aspect of the Carnegie Commission's inquiry.

The Common Carrier Task Force also spurred the NCCB to consider this area

of policy when planning its own programming (NCCB, 1977f, 1977g, 1977s). The

consensus of the conference participants was that distinctions between traditional

broadcasting and cable were becoming increasingly blurred and that the initial promise

of public access to cable was not living up to its potential. The NCCB immediately

began work with the Consumer Federation of America to form an ongoing task force

to address some of these issues.

Board of Directors

The board of directors had made a lot of progress towards its goal of building an active and participatory board by 1977 (NCCB, 1977o). The original board had always planned to expand, and it finally had a full roster of individuals who could develop long-term policy and programming goals. The new members represented a cross-section of the public interest community, and all of them were leaders in their own right. By mid-1977, the board consisted of Johnson, who was still the chair; Ellen Agreess, an attorney with Moore, Berson & Lifflander; Charles Benton, president of Films Incorporated; Warren Braren, associate director of the Consumers Union; Ted Carpenter, executive director of the NCCB; Ralph Jennings, deputy director of the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ; Kathleen Nolan, president of the Screen Actors Guild; Robert Stein, secretary treasurer and general counsel to the NCCB and an attorney with Eaton, Stein, Plesser and Efroymson; B. J. Stiles, special assistant to the chairman at the National Endowment for the Humanities; George Stoney, codirector of the Alternate Media Center; Esteban Torres, ambassador to UNESCO; Phil Watson, senior program manager for the Booker T. Washington Foundation; and William Zimmerman, an attorney and realtor (NCCB, 1977e, 1977g). Finally, it seemed that efforts to create a board of directors that could direct long-term policy and fund-raising programs was becoming a reality. Before that could happen, though, an unfortunate set of circumstances intruded on the board's high expectations.

<p align="center">Downward Spiral</p>

By September 1977, the always precarious funding situation at the NCCB began to take a toll on Carpenter. Many times he was forced to borrow against future

foundation grants to keep the NCCB progressing. When those grants were not forthcoming, Carpenter resigned as executive director of the NCCB. He took a senior-level staff position with the Carnegie Commission on public broadcasting after preparing one more proposal for three major foundations that had been NCCB supporters in the past (Johnson, 1977c, 1977g, 1977l, 1977m). Carpenter agreed to stay on with the board of directors to assure some continuity between him and whomever his replacement would be, but his departure left a vacuum that was not easily filled (Johnson, 1977d, 1978; NCCB, 1977l). The board of directors formed a search committee. In the interim, they named Pat Scott, the director of special projects, to the post of deputy executive director. Scott assumed most of Carpenter's responsibilities, but the search committee decided to reactivate the unfilled position of president so that administrative duties would not be solely the responsibility of one person.

The committee's first choice for the job waited 3 weeks and then declined to accept the position (Johnson, 1977p). The committee's second choice, Carolyn E. Setlow, a former executive with the Harris organization in New York, considered the offer over the course of 6 weeks (Johnson, 1977e, 1978). By the end of November, the proposal Carpenter prepared for the foundations was rejected finally or conditionally by all of them (Johnson, 1977c). The foundations were understandably nervous about making large commitments to the NCCB without knowing that its leadership was firmly committed to the program. Meanwhile, Johnson was forced to draft an alternative program and funding proposal to present to the board at its December meeting (Johnson, 1977c, 1977f; NCCB, 1977m). Not only had the NCCB been

unable to find transitional leadership, but its future prospects looked grim.

According to Johnson, there were five options available to the board of directors (Johnson, 1977c). They could hang on and try, against all odds, to continue their current $350,000 to $400,000 a year program, or they could opt to cut that level by 10% to 20%—an action that had already been effectively taken when the staff voluntarily took a 20% pay cut and Johnson took a 78% pay cut. Another option for the NCCB was to radically cut the budget to the $75,000-$150,000 range, which would mean that the NCCB would be reduced to a one-person operation. A limited budget like this would require the curtailment of all programs. The last option was to dissolve the NCCB entirely after money was raised to cover current financial obligations.

Working under the assumption that no money was available to run a $350,000 a year operation, Johnson recommended that the board consider trying to keep the NCCB going with a budget between $75,000 and $150,000, although he was clearly unhappy with this option and was not committing himself to it (Johnson, 1977c). According to Johnson, the need for the NCCB was just as great as ever, and many of its programs and accomplishments were self-sustaining or could be operated in that manner. Johnson said that it would be less expensive to continue to raise money and operate a lower cost program to try to pay off the bills than it would be to dissolve the program entirely and then try to raise money. If the money could be raised for a $100,000 a year program, special program grants could be used to fund each project in its entirety.

If the board voted to accept Johnson's proposal for a $100,000 operation, they could continue to publish *access* (Johnson, 1977c). Koch agreed to edit the magazine through the end of 1978. *access* was the NCCB's most enduring project, and if its subscriber base remained constant, *access* could pay Koch and other costs on its subscription money alone. Johnson added one caveat, however. If the magazine was unable to continue its direct-mail promotions, the subscriber base would dwindle, but he believed it could be produced for a year before those effects would be felt. Johnson recommended that the NCCB keep its current members active by continuing to publish *Media Watch*. He said that the NCCB had a moral obligation to thousands of people who had already sent in their donations for that year, and if the NCCB spent $10,500 a year to send two renewal notices and six issues of *Media Watch* to 7,000 members over the course of 1 year, even with a minimal 20% renewal rate, they would still be earning money from the investment.

Johnson still had great hope for the ratings project (Johnson, 1977c). He was certain that funding could be found for this project, and he believed that this program would bring in revenue over the long term. He also believed that the NCCB needed to have at least one substantive program in place at all times. Since the conference had been so successful, Johnson hoped that this annual program could be continued by hiring a part-time coordinator and finding sponsorship.

If his recommendations were accepted and a minimum budget of $100,000 could be raised, personnel costs would have to be drastically reduced (Johnson, 1977c). There was no room in a $100,000 budget for a director, a president, and a chair. Johnson was willing to curtail his public information campaign, but he warned

that this option would drastically reduce the NCCB's exposure in the media, activities

that had increased the membership and fund-raising capacity of the organization in the

past. The public information campaign was at the heart of the NCCB's public

education mission. Although Johnson admitted that his association with the NCCB

had sometimes been a mixed blessing, he believed that on the whole it had been

helpful. He was not committed to curtailing his role, but he could not continue at his

current level of involvement without at least being compensated for his expenses. He

said that he would be willing to forego his $12,000 a year salary for a half-time

commitment. In addition, a $100,000 budget would not cover the cost of the NCCB's

research costs, but there was a possibility that incremental funding could be found to

keep DeVerneil on staff and the program operating. Six people worked in the business

office; he recommended that only one of them be retained and that all direct-mail and

cold-contact programs be dropped.

　　While the board of directors and Johnson considered their options, Setlow

considered her options (Setlow, 1977). She initially decided to accept the position of

president of the NCCB on the condition that a $100,000 program was in place and that

the office be moved to New York City. The search committee and Setlow attended a

meeting with the board of directors and foundation administrators. It appeared that her

conditions could be met (Johnson, 1978). Five days later she changed her mind. In a

letter she wrote to the board informing them of her decision, she focused on the

deficiencies of the NCCB (Setlow, 1977). Setlow did her homework, saying that,

although there was a widespread acknowledgment among the foundation community

that the NCCB had accomplished miracles with limited funds, there was also a sense

that the organization lacked focus and clearly identifiable goals. According to her

assessment, the NCCB had never put adequate structures into place that would have

allowed it to create an ongoing institution. Initially if she had taken the job, her

proposal would have been to develop and support ongoing mechanisms for public

input and to develop a network of support for NCCB's activities in order to achieve

this goal.

Setlow (1977) believed that the best way to institutionalize the NCCB would

be to recruit a small, highly professional staff responsible for meeting the needs of a

network of supporters. If separate funding could be obtained, she would have elected

to continue to develop the violence project, the ratings project, the direct- mail project,

access, and the public information activities of Johnson. The only difference between

her original plans and the NCCB's existing programs was that she would have

attempted to carry it out on her own with a budget that was more than one third less

than the one that the NCCB had been working with over the past 3 years.

Setlow (1977) had met with various foundation representatives privately.

Although the Rockefeller Family Fund and Veatech had already made commitments to

the board to see the NCCB through the next 6 months, and Veatech had said that they

might be willing to fund the organization for another 6 months after that, their support

represented a minimum of $50,000 and a maximum of $90,000. The likelihood of

being able to hire a staff or carry out any programming with that type of funding did

not seem probable to Setlow. She also had met with a number of other private

foundations over the course of the last several weeks, and none of them had expressed

interest in providing funding for the NCCB. Furthermore, she said, "They all warn me

that there are few foundations beyond themselves with any real interest in this area today (Setlow, 1977, p. 1). Setlow met with the Markle Foundation twice, and they said it was unlikely that they would be making additional grants to the NCCB, mostly because they could not offer permanent support to any organization and they believed that the NCCB was unlikely to broaden its base of support. The Stern Foundation said that they would not support the NCCB, mostly because "they never stick with anything too long" (Setlow, 1977, p. 1). Frank Debyns of ARCA saw little to no possibility of providing funding and said the foundation was already committed for the upcoming year. Debyns also said that he understood what the NCCB was trying to do but that trying to translate NCCB's goals to actual change would be a long-term commitment. He indicated that foundations do not have the patience to stay with a project without seeing immediate short-term results.

Since the NCCB had decided that any contributions from major donors should be applied to current liabilities, this left no funding for future projects (Setlow, 1977). Setlow also expressed her opinion that any forthcoming contributions were dependent on the personal charisma of Johnson, and if the NCCB could not afford to pay Johnson for his contribution, it was unlikely that he would be able to continue his current level of commitment to the organization. However, Setlow also explored the possibility that some corporations might be willing to fund the NCCB's ratings project. There was general consensus among donors that even if the NCCB was able to design a system that measured qualitative responses the corporations would be unwilling to purchase it from an organization like the NCCB. The NCCB was too controversial, and the corporations believed it would not be credible.

The last point that Setlow (1977) made was that the cold prospect direct campaigns for membership that had been conducted to date had not met the goals of the organization. In order to retain the current membership, Setlow said they would need to continue publishing *access* and *Media Watch*. In her estimation, adequate funding was not available for these endeavors.

Unfortunately, Setlow's letter supported the conclusions that Johnson had reached in his proposal for a reduced program that would operate on a $100,000 budget annually. Johnson was more optimistic than Setlow; he floated various publication proposals to the board, and he had more faith in the income-producing possibilities of the ratings project (Johnson, 1977c, 1977p). Even if Johnson was willing to acknowledge privately that Setlow's arguments for not accepting the position were pragmatic and defensible, he still believed that there was a real need for the type of organization that he originally envisioned. Still, times were changing, and there was a new administration in the White House that won the election in part because they promised voters that they would eliminate a government that wrapped itself in red tape (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). It appeared that the country was fatigued with the concept of social change, and a new wave of conservatism threatened to engulf regulatory policy and attitudes toward government in general. After 30 years, the public was getting complacent, and the shortcomings of the commercial broadcasting system did not seem to be as threatening as they did when television was still a novelty. The mission that the NCCB was dedicated to became less important, and foundations were moving on to other causes.

The NCCB was able to obtain $50,000 to fund it through the first 6 months of

1978 (Johnson, 1978; NCCB, 1977l). The board of directors appointed Pat Scott to the

position of executive director. Johnson had lecture obligations through mid-February,

but he told the board he would return to Washington, DC, after that to assist Scott. He

suggested that the NCCB put out joint issues of *access* and *Media Watch* for February,

April, and June and that they try to retain a membership base throughout the coming

months of transition.

By late December 1977, the board of directors believed that their only option

was to put the NCCB in caretaker status (Johnson, 1978). They dismissed all

employees and curtailed all programs. The publication of *access* was suspended.

Meanwhile, some of the board members decided to pursue other opportunities. Ellen

Agreess began work at NBC. Warren Braren, past president of the NCCB, believed

there was a conflict of interest with his work at the Consumers Union due to the

ongoing grant from General Foods; consequently, he resigned from his position on the

board. Ralph Jennings felt discouraged and did not want to contribute to an

organization that clearly lacked the financial resources to accomplish its goals. B. J.

Stiles believed that there was a conflict between his new position on the board of the

National Endowments for the Arts and the NCCB's pending application before that

foundation. Esteban Torres remained on the board but had become an ambassador to

UNESCO in Paris and, thus, was out of town frequently.

A bare-bones staff remained in order to solicit donations to pay off the

$100,000 debt. By this time, the foundations that agreed to fund the NCCB through

the second quarter of the fiscal year, together with the remaining board of directors,

believed that it was important to reevaluate the status of the media reform movement

(Johnson, 1978). Media reform had moved into the mainstream with the American Medical Association, PTA, and others promoting the cause. Many of the media reformers of the 1970s were working for the government (Krasnow et al., 1982). Kramer and Shepherd were at the FTC. The Carnegie Commission was studying public broadcasting, and Ted Carpenter was on its staff. The House Subcommittee on Communications was in the process of rewriting the Communications Act of 1934, and cries for deregulation were coming to the forefront of regulatory discussions.

Consequently, the board of directors asked Ann Branscomb, an academic who was extremely knowledgeable in the field of media reform, to conduct a study that would guide the decisions of the board (Johnson, 1978). She concluded that the NCCB should continue, but she suggested that it should explore the option of affiliating with another organization. Johnson decided that it would be best if the NCCB had new leadership and stepped down from his position as chair. Johnson had never intended to involve himself with the administrative aspects of the NCCB, and he believed that his role was now obsolete. However, Johnson did retain a seat on the board of directors. He had given the NCCB all that he had. After 5 years of continual and passionate involvement with the NCCB movement, he was ready to pursue other opportunities.

Johnson spoke with a number of organizations about the possibility of incorporating the NCCB into their programs (Johnson, 1978; N. Johnson, personal communications, December 22, 2000). Johnson met Ralph Nader when he was at the University of California at Berkeley. When Johnson approached Nader about the possibility of adopting the NCCB, he was open to the idea. Nader selected Samuel Simon, a public interest attorney who had worked for him, to become the new

executive director of the NCCB. Simon assumed the position in September 1978. He

immediately resumed the publication of *access*, began a new program to recruit a

broad-based national membership, and consequently resumed the publication of *Media

Watch*. Simon also created a new board of directors.

The NCCB survived but eventually assumed a new name, the

Telecommunications Research and Action Center (TRAC) (Telecommunications

Research and Action Center, 2001). Its focus was recast, and it now concentrates

exclusively on telecommunication policy positions. By June 2001, its membership

provided 95% of its budget. Simon is still there, and he is chairman of a board that

includes Andrew J. Schwartzman, chairman of the media access project and member

of the Aspen Institute's Communication and Society Program; Henry Geller, a past

general counsel to the FCC; and the Reverend Dr. Everett Parker, who at 85 is still

active in the struggle for media reform.

Johnson is now a visiting professor at the University of Iowa at Iowa City, and

Shepherd is the editor of a nationally syndicated column called *News of the Weird* (N.

Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000; C. Shepherd, personal

communication, March 13, 2001). The Communication Act of 1934 was rewritten in

1996, and it effectively cast aside any remaining public service obligations for

broadcasters (Aufderheide, 1999). Currently the FCC is considering the suspension of

the 35% monopoly rule that prohibited a broadcaster from acquiring more than 35% of

a national broadcasting audience.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was an attempt to shed light on a forgotten chapter of American broadcast history. While some historians have examined the media reform movement of the 1960s and 1970s, there has been no in-depth analysis of the NCCB, a public interest group that represented the movement as a whole. The present study attempted to expand the historical record of an era when a substantial segment of the public believed that media reform was possible by providing a record of organizational structure and activities of the NCCB.

Summary

The first goal of this study was to search the historical record of American broadcasting to examine previous moments when the efforts of reformers were able to influence the public discourse and to place the goals and objectives of the NCCB in the proper historical context. There were a few times in the history of American broadcasting when media reform activists and organizations were able to influence the public discourse. In fact, there were many times when that discourse attempted to define the public interest. Czitrom (1982) maintained that voices had argued for reform ever since the government allowed the privatization of the telegraph (Douglas,

1987; Engelman, 1996). Morse himself hoped to sell his patent to the government. He wanted the telegraph used to encourage a more participatory form of democracy. Other citizens also saw the enormous public service potential of the medium. When the possibility of wireless telegraphy began to be seen as an opportunity to rectify the failures of policy that had given rise to the commercialization of telegraphy, the precedent for allowing public resources to be controlled by private interests was already too established to entertain other options seriously.

When the Radio Act of 1912 was adopted, it required all radio operators to obtain a license. Many amateur operators opposed those restrictions (Douglas, 1987; Engelman, 1996). The American Radio Relay League demonstrated that amateurs could organize a network of operators to transmit messages nationwide. This network generated a tremendous amount of coverage in the press. Educators who wanted to extend their public service missions to the airwaves, along with the American Radio Relay League, were somewhat successful in raising the level of public discourse to include their interests during the period surrounding the introduction of the Alexander Bill (Witherspoon et al., 2000). This bill would have allowed the military to develop a government-owned noncommercial network that would compete with, and develop alongside, a commercial broadcasting system. The Alexander Bill was defeated. Commercial interests prevailed because they were able to convince regulators that corporations that had the most resources would be the most capable of developing the potential of this new industry.

When regulators sought the expertise of industry professionals during the radio

conferences of the 1920s, they allowed commercial broadcasters to establish the

parameters of the regulatory framework (Benjamin, 1998; Engelman, 1996;

McChesney, 1993). They effectively ignored the voices of educators and amateurs

who called for a more democratic solution to the congestion of the airwaves. Although

educators and activists were marginally successful in their efforts to raise the level of

public discourse to encompass proposals for various alternatives to the commercial

structure of broadcasting, their proposals were overwhelmed by the broadcast

industry's lobbying. However, the legislators did give a passing nod to those who

envisioned an alternative to a commercial structure of the broadcasting industry when

they proclaimed that radio licensees held their licenses in the public interest,

convenience, or necessity.

Still, All Was Not Lost

After the Radio Act of 1927 passed, it was evident that the commercial

broadcasting system was not meeting the needs of many citizens (McChesney, 1993;

Witherspoon et al., 2000). Between 1928 and 1934, broadcast reform organizations

were once again able to raise the level of public awareness to include the discussion of

alternatives to the commercial system that was now accepted as the status quo. Reform

organizations representing agricultural interests, educators, church groups, religious

leaders, labor, civil libertarians, intellectuals, and other citizens were able to gather

60,000 signatures in support of the Wagner-Hatfield amendment that would have set

aside 25% of the spectrum for noncommercial broadcasters. Congress held hearings

on the subject, but reformers were never able to agree on a single solution to the

problem nor was a consensus reached on the definition of what constituted the public interest. The Wagner-Hatfield amendment was defeated. The issue of whether or not a separate noncommercial network of stations should be established versus increased collaboration with the commercial broadcasters polarized the movement and eventually contributed to its defeat.

There were some peripheral discussions of the issues that reformers raised over the years between the defeat of the broadcast reform movement of the 1930s and the next wave of reformers that led to the formation of the Carnegie Commission and the NCCB (Baughman, 1981; Sterling & Kittross, 1990). In 1941, the FCC, in an effort to encourage more diversity on the airwaves, forced NBC to divest itself of one of its networks. NBC sold its Blue Network to comply with chain broadcasting rules. In the early 1940s, the definition of the public interest was expanded to include the value of multiple voices on the airwaves.

The FCC created a new class of service in 1938 on the high-frequency band. In 1940, channels were set aside for noncommercial broadcasters. By 1945, the FCC moved the new service to the FM band and expanded the channels available to noncommercial broadcasters. In 1952, the *Sixth Report and Order* reserved television channels for noncommercial broadcasters. The FCC also periodically attempted to define broadcasters' public service obligations, most notably with the *Public Service Responsibilities of Broadcasters* (*Blue Book*) and with the Fairness Doctrine, but it was not until the social and political landscape changed that the public will for reform began to surface once again.

Social and Political Change

      After the early promise of television began to fade, social critics began to question the medium that had been so eagerly adopted by a majority of Americans (Baughman, 1981; Ranly, 1976). Violent programming and increasing commercialism were seen as threats to the culture by many Americans. When President John F. Kennedy came into office, he inspired many public service- oriented young people to consider the possibility of working for the improvement of a better society (Junker, 1971). When Kennedy appointed Newton Minow to chair the FCC, Minow viewed his power as an extension of that framework (Minow, 1965). When Minow made his *Vast Wasteland* speech, it resonated strongly with citizens who were worried about the issues he raised. Although Minow was ultimately frustrated in many of his attempts to realize his goals, he did succeed in raising the level of public discourse to include the discussion of matters that were most often ignored by the mainstream press.

      By the time Nicholas Johnson was sworn in as an FCC commissioner in 1966, Congress had already passed the Educational Facilities Act that created funding for the establishment of educational television stations (Witherspoon et al., 2000). The Carnegie Commission was meeting to discuss the future of public broadcasting, and the United Church of Christ had already established standing for citizens in license renewal hearings (Johnson, 1967). The civil rights movement, the free speech movement, and the growing antiwar movement were creating activists from all walks of life who began to question the legitimacy of established social and political institutions (Ranly, 1976). The media came under increased scrutiny from those who

viewed it as a symbolic and active institution that was sorely in need of structural reform. These social conditions created a climate where citizens were receptive of the arguments posed by media reformers. By the time the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 passed, Johnson had already established his credentials as a consumer advocate on the FCC (Grubb, 1996; Lebec, 1999). When Johnson (1967) published *How to Talk Back to Your Television Set*, he was not advocating for any revolutionary actions. Instead he was encouraging citizens to take advantage of the legal rights they already possessed. Johnson urged the public to translate its dissatisfaction with mass media and the culture it produced into actions that would improve the quality of commercial broadcasting.

A Leader With a Mission

Toward the end of his term on the FCC, Johnson realized that he had an interest in continuing his role as an advocate for the public's interest in broadcasting in a capacity outside of governmental policy administration (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). Johnson wanted to test his proposition that a political-style campaign devoted to media education could provide a catalyst for citizen involvement and participation in broadcasting. When Johnson accepted Benton's offer to assume the role of chair of the NCCB, the objective was to create a public interest organization that could function as a trade association for local citizen reform groups that were acting independently. It was reasoned that a national umbrella organization could help unify the media reform movement and provide an institutional voice for its members. The ultimate intention of the NCCB was to encourage

broadcasters to become more responsive to the public interest so that a more

participatory and democratic version of commercial broadcasting could be developed.

Media Play

Johnson was a charismatic and controversial speaker who was able to attract

considerable attention from the press (Grubb, 1996; Junker, 1971; Lebec, 1999; C.

Shepherd, personal communication, March 13, 2001). The NCCB became a vehicle

for advancing Johnson's public education campaign, and he designed programming

goals for the organization that would allow the NCCB to continue to generate

publicity for its reform agenda (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22,

2000). For example, when the NCCB published the results of its Ohio/Michigan

license renewal project, it provided the press and public with a systematic ranking of

local television stations' performances (NCCB, 1976c). For the first time, the abstract

expectation that television licensees had public service obligations was defined by data

that categorized the actual broadcast time each station devoted to this type of

programming. Media critics used this information to write stories that contributed to

the NCCB's public education campaign. Media reform activists in Michigan and Ohio

used this information when negotiating with local stations during the license renewal

process.

The NCCB public affairs project was closely related to the Ohio/Michigan

license renewal project; that is, it asked local stations to devote 1 hour of prime-time

programming weekly to local public affairs (NCCB, 1976o). The proposal also asked

television networks to devote 1 hour each week of prime time to public affairs

programming. The NCCB gathered support for its proposal from more than 100

citizen groups across the country, and it was able to generate substantial coverage for

its proposal in the press when 13 members of Congress also endorsed it (Chisholm,

1976). Just as the Ohio/Michigan project had furthered the public education campaign

of the NCCB, the public affairs project focused attention on the goals of media

reformers, and it provided an important tool for negotiation when television stations'

licenses came up for renewal.

 The most successful public education campaign of the NCCB was the violence

index project (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). When the

NCCB conducted a content analysis of violent acts during prime-time network

programming and linked them to advertisers who sponsored the most violent

programs, violence on television became a focal point for widespread public

dissatisfaction. Johnson urged the public to demonstrate its economic power. He asked

viewers to write advertisers, networks, and producers of violent programs. Although

Johnson stopped short of asking the public to boycott the products of corporations that

sponsored violent programs, he did say it was an option to consider.

 Despite attempts by all three networks to discredit the methodology employed

in the NCCB violence index studies, they were unable to deny that they had a direct

economic stake in propagating violent television programs (Carpenter, 1976d; N.

Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000; Rubens, 1977). By publicly

embarrassing the corporations who provided economic support to the networks by

creating an environment where many sponsors were compelled to publicly withdraw their support of these programs, the NCCB gave the public a potent weapon to express its dissatisfaction with network programming. After the third 6-week study was completed, and after the resulting index was released to the press and public, the networks reduced the violent content of their programming for the first time in television history.

Another integral aspect of the NCCB's strategy was to provide support services for local advocacy groups by furnishing them with the information needed to achieve their own goals (Johnson, 1974c, 1974g). The NCCB publication program included the distribution of *access*, a biweekly magazine that provided news of interest to all aspects of the media reform movement (NCCB, 1974g). *access* featured lengthy articles that analyzed current regulatory policy, pending legislation, and reports detailing with the NCCB's position on legal issues. The magazine also provided a format for the exchange of information among geographically dispersed subscribers, and it provided local groups with strategic and organizational advice.

Institution Building

It had always been Johnson's goal to create an institution with a massive membership base (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). Johnson reasoned that if the NCCB could claim to represent 100,000 dues-paying members, the positions taken by the organization would carry substantial weight with elected officials. However, despite his personal efforts, numerous direct-mail

campaigns, and outside consultants, the NCCB never attracted the substantial

membership base that would have given it mainstream political legitimacy. At its

peak, the NCCB had a membership of approximately 12,000 people; that base was not

large enough to support the goals of the organization (NCCB, 1977r). The problem

with building an organization based on a large membership is that the expense of

maintaining an ongoing direct-mail campaign to build the membership is beyond the

resources that the NCCB had at its disposal.

By the end of 1977, Johnson and his staff concluded that

membership building was doomed to be limited because the nature of
media reform was such that it was a supportive movement—one that
was largely undertaken to fulfill higher priorities such as the welfare of
children, the reduction of violence in American society, etc. (Johnson,
1977c, p. 1)

Although the violence index project had been successful as far as recruiting new

members, Johnson concluded that the NCCB should return to its primary objective of

continuing its ongoing goal of public education.

The NCCB's failure to attract a substantial membership base had other

repercussions as well. The NCCB had to rely on philanthropic foundations for the

majority of its income. According to Johnson, many of the people who manage

foundations looked for short-term, high-profile projects to support (N. Johnson,

personal communication, December 22, 2000). As such, foundations were most

willing to fund specific programs with quantifiable goals, but they did not have the

patience to invest their money in an organization whose mission it was to create an

ongoing program of public education with the hope that it might some day lead to a

more participatory and democratic form of commercial broadcasting. The lack of

sustainable funding mechanisms and the inability to attract a substantial membership base eventually led to the dissolution of the NCCB in 1978 when it was absorbed by Nader's organization.

This financial situation was not unique to the NCCB. Many public interest organizations saw their support dwindle during this period (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 20000; Krasnow et al., 1982). The social and political will that supported many of these organizations during the 1960s and early 1970s began to dissipate by the middle of the decade. Foundations turned their attention elsewhere, and broadcast reform began to be defined by a general proclivity towards the deregulation of private industries. In addition, according to Johnson, by 1978 the public had grown so accustomed to commercial broadcasting that despite its failure to serve the public interest, as defined by the NCCB, the public grew complacent (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000).

There were also other reasons why the NCCB was unable to become a permanent institution. Like other public service organizations of the period, such as Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, the NCCB was inextricably linked to the public persona of Nicholas Johnson. While Johnson spent a tremendous amount of time and energy publicizing the goals and objectives of the organization, building membership and raising funds, and developing programs, he never had the time or the skill necessary to create an institutional structure that would allow the NCCB to grow beyond him. The NCCB board of directors supported his proposals but rarely provided direction. Twenty-three years after resigning from his position at the NCCB, Johnson said that

beyond wanting to create a democratically organizational structure he spent most of his time trying to raise money (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). He compared his focus to that of a politician running for the Senate. Each day when politicians wake up, they know they have to raise a certain amount of money to stay in the race. Johnson said that long-term planning often took a back seat to the day-to-day business of the organization. In short, Johnson did not have the luxury of planning ahead.

<div style="text-align:center">Conclusions</div>

After examining the archival records of the NCCB, the evidence shows that the organization successfully met many of its short-term goals, despite the notable failures discussed earlier. *access* had a subscriber base of several thousand readers, and it was close to breaking even when it was discontinued (Johnson, 1977c). Johnson and Shepherd ruled out the possibility of subsidizing the publication of the magazine with advertising revenue. Instead they solicited one-time grants from major donors and foundations to support the publication (Shepherd, 1976b). The high degree of credibility that the magazine enjoyed was due to its editorial integrity, but its small overworked staff never had the time or inclination to promote the magazine outside of its limited audience. A professional sales staff might have been able to increase subscription sales. A liberal policy of providing NCCB donors and those who could not afford the price of a subscription may have been an unaffordable luxury.

The records show that Johnson was not unaware of this situation (Johnson, 1975f, 1977c). He consistently suggested that the staff devote more of its efforts to

marketing the magazine, and he repeatedly voiced his opinion that *access* could become a substantial source of revenue for the NCCB. Johnson also wanted to focus more energy on the entire publication program of the NCCB. Unfortunately, the *access* staff was unwilling or unable to follow through on his suggestions. Johnson's internship program provided *access* with a research staff that was able to maximize the resources that were allocated to *access*, but even with the most dedicated staff in the business, the focus was on meeting deadlines. They did not have time to consider how the magazine contributed to the overall goals of the organization, they did not have time to market the magazine, and they did not have the time or resources to develop the entire publication program—a program that might have been able to provide a revenue stream for the NCCB.

The primary goal of this study was to evaluate the success of the NCCB and the media reform movement it represented. The NCCB produced programs and projects that met its immediate objectives. *access* functioned as a credible trade journal for the movement, and the public affairs proposal reached the goals of obtaining the number of endorsements envisioned by the NCCB (1976h, 1976q). The Ohio/Michigan project provided accessible information for activists, citizens, and media critics to use when forming evaluations of their local television stations (NCCB, 1976v). The violence index was an effective tool for membership recruitment, and it was directly responsible for reducing violent content on network programming (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000). The NCCB legislative and regulatory policy participation program contributed to the deliberation process. In fact,

several controversial nominations to high-level government posts were withdrawn

after the NCCB and others made their objections known (NCCB, 1975z).

Other programs and projects were less successful. The California project, an

extension of the Ohio/Michigan project, was never completed due to the financial

situation that led to the dissolution of the NCCB (NCCB, 1977j). The ratings project

was also aborted. The membership program was ultimately abandoned because it

became evident that it was not readily achievable. Some early proposals, such as

establishing a speaker's bureau and sending consultants to organize local citizens

groups, were never developed past the conceptual stage.

These programs and projects had short-term, quantifiable goals, but the overall

mission of the NCCB, that of conducting an ongoing public media education

campaign that might some day lead to a more participatory and democratic version of

broadcasting, was less amenable to quantifiable analysis. Since the NCCB is no longer

in existence, a superficial evaluation of the record of the NCCB's accomplishments

might suggest that despite the success of some of the NCCB's programs and projects

there were no measurable or sustainable actions or changes that created a more

responsive or more democratic form of commercial broadcasting during the period

studied (Krasnow et al., 1982; McChesney, 1999; Rowland, 1982). There is certainly

some truth in this argument.

However, there is evidence that suggests that the public media education

program undertaken by the NCCB did reach a substantial audience and that it was

effective in communicating the goals of the NCCB. In August 1977, Johnson prepared

an annual activities report for the board of directors (Johnson, 1977a). In this report,

he attempted to quantify the value of his contributions to the NCCB media education

program. Between July 1, 1976, and June 30, 1977, Johnson wrote 18 columns for

access, he wrote 4 *Media Watch* issues, and he published 20 articles in newspapers

and magazines. That year Johnson appeared on 10 network programs, 40 local

television productions, 4 radio network programs, and 28 local radio shows. Over the

course of that 1 year, Johnson also provided commentary for 51 separate editions of

NPR's *All Things Considered*, and he was interviewed for two BBC documentaries. In

addition, Johnson delivered 22 public speeches, testified before Congress 3 times, and

attended 28 meetings on behalf of the NCCB.

It is impossible to know how many people Johnson reached with his campaign

or how many people were enlightened by his message, but if the note he received from

one young man is indicative of those who did hear his message, it is reasonable to

conclude that Johnson was an effective educator. After Johnson spoke at the U.S.

Coast Guard Academy, he received this letter:

> Dear Mr. Johnson,
> Your lecture on Friday 21 November was a very personal experience
> for me. For several years now I have despised all political activity and
> hence any involvement. Now I realize—as exemplified by your work—
> that involvement and a higher consciousness is the only hope we have
> for democracy to succeed. I pray that God will continue to bless you in
> your work and keep you safe. (Schumaker, 1975, p. 1)

If one is willing to evaluate the success of the media reform movement of the

late 1960s and 1970s based on whether or not those efforts directly resulted in a major

restructuring of the entire industry, it would not be difficult to dismiss the NCCB and

the general movement as a temporary aberration that did not result in any lasting

change. In one such evaluation, Rowland (1982) argued that any reforms that were

accomplished by the media reform movement of the 1960s and early 1970s were

symbolic and ritualistic enactments that only served to legitimate the structure that

was already in place. McChesney (1999) reiterated this argument and noted that by the

1990s, because of the advent of the free-market theology as the reigning civic religion,

any gains that were achieved during the 1960s and 1970s had been lost. Although

McChesney (1999) acknowledged that the reform movement did have some notable

successes, he described these gains as little more than holding actions.

This conclusion dismisses the more qualitative achievements of the NCCB. An

additional problem with Rowland's (1982) and McChesney's (1999) conclusions

about the media reform movement of this era is that they are dependent on the

conviction that the hegemony of commercial broadcasting is so fixed, so static, and so

immutable and that no alternatives to it can be imagined without completely

superseding the entire system. Rather than using an inflexible interpretation that is

based on Marxist theory to understand how the history of broadcasting in America

developed, it is infinitely more productive to understand broadcast history as a fluid

and ever-emerging cultural practice. If one looks at the activities of the NCCB from

this perspective, it is not difficult to understand the current media environment as one

that has at least partially incorporated the objectives of the NCCB and the media

reform movement it represented.

For example, the NCCB's public media education program has been taken up

by other institutions. Many public school systems have media literacy programs, and

some have facilities that allow students to learn by contributing to the production of

media themselves. There are dozens of general circulation periodicals that regularly include articles critiquing the media, and even the smallest newspapers feature more or less critical evaluations of television programs. The average high school student in America today is probably at least as media savvy as the most ardent supporter of the NCCB was in 1975. When the NCCB promoted the idea that citizens need to view media from a critical perspective, people listened. The NCCB successfully provided the public with evidence that showed that the networks made programming decisions based on economic considerations that were often in conflict with the public interest of reducing the number of violent acts on television. Discussions pertaining to the market structure of the broadcasting industry have become a component of the public discourse concerning the role of media in society.

The violence index project also served to demonstrate how communication scholars and academic researchers could contribute to policy discussions and decisions. The NCCB brought George Gerbner's media effects research into the public discourse. By doing so, the NCCB promoted the idea that academic expertise is relevant to communications policy discussions. The violence index created highly visible evidence of the ways in which communication researchers can use their expertise to address public communication policy issues. Other scholars may have been inspired by the public discussion and high visibility given to academic research at the time when the NCCB's violence index project was highly publicized. Although the specific issues addressed by communications scholars has changed, there has been a resurgence of scholarship devoted to public telecommunications policy in recent years (Avery, 2001).

The violence index project also served to educate the public in terms of the power they held as consumers. When the NCCB urged the public to write sponsors of violent programming to express its disapproval, the NCCB encouraged the public to flex its economic muscles. Although Johnson may not have been the first leader to endorse this strategy, the high visibility of the violence index project demonstrated its effectiveness. This strategy has since been used by other citizen groups.

Unfortunately, Johnson and the NCCB failed to address the fundamental issue of how to maintain the economic visibility of a national organization. The NCCB was overly reliant on foundation funding from the beginning, and it was probably somewhat naive of Johnson to expect that financial support for the NCCB would be maintained indefinitely by philanthropic organizations that generally support short-term projects that address immediate objectives. Despite Johnson's efforts to build a self-sustaining membership base, he failed to attract the amount of individual donors necessary to support a national organization. By the late 1970s, a sufficiently large cross-section of the public was no longer interested enough in the issues that the NCCB addressed. As new technology brought more viewing options to the public, the NCCB failed to recognize that the relevant policy issues were changing. If the NCCB had adapted its mission to encompass the changing media environment, it might have been possible to attract a membership base that could have supported a national organization that contributed to the discussion of new communication policy issues.

After Johnson resigned from his position at the NCCB, Ralph Nader assumed Johnson's position and eventually appointed Samuel Simon to the position of executive director of the NCCB (Johnson, 1978). Simon enlarged the focus of the

NCCB to include telecommunication policy issues and changed the name of the organization to the TRAC. Simon was able to build a membership base that provides 95% of the TRAC's current budget. If Johnson had been able to adapt the focus of the NCCB to the issues that TRAC still addresses, his charismatic leadership might have been able to continue to attract the type of media attention that brought the discussion of broadcast policy into the public discourse when he was at the helm of the NCCB.

The Current Media Environment

It is obvious that the contemporary media environment is very different from the one that existed when the NCCB was most active. Rather than the three commercial broadcasting networks that were most accessible to consumers in 1975, the average viewer can watch dozens of networks delivered by satellite, cable, and even the Internet. The scarcity rationale that informed the regulation of both the market structure of the broadcasting industry and the public trustee responsibilities of license holders was still strongly in place during the time when the NCCB was most active (Krasnow et al., 1982). During the 1970s, the FCC still required license holders to ascertain community needs when their licenses came up for renewal, and broadcasters were still required to offer programming that served the informational needs of a public that was still dependent on a limited number of media outlets. The scarcity rationale also served to provide the NCCB and other public interest media organizations with a stakeholder interest in the ongoing discussions that attempted to define the public interest, convenience, or necessity.

The structure of the media market has changed radically since the 1970s

(Aufderheide, 1999; Levi, 2000; Meyerson, 1997). By the time legislators passed the

Telecommunications Act of 1996, the public was able to receive a vast array of media

services. Consequently, legislators reasoned that the structure of the contemporary

media environment no longer justified the regulation of the broadcast industry on the

basis of spectrum scarcity. By 1996, legislators, regulators, and public interest

organizations no longer equated the public interest with a tightly regulated

telecommunications market. Instead, by the mid-1990s, it was assumed that the public

interest, convenience, or necessity would best be served by allowing a competitive

marketplace to dictate the structure of broadcasting.

This redefinition of the public interest was partially due to the perceived

promise of new technologies (Aufderheide, 1999; Levi, 2000; Meyerson, 1997). The

1996 rewrite of the Communications Act of 1934 was designed to create a regulatory

environment that would encourage competition and technological innovation in all

sectors of the telecommunications industry. The old barriers between traditional

definitions of mass media, computing, and telephony were seen as artificial restraints

that were no longer relevant. Therefore, it was reasoned that public interest would be

served by meeting the needs of consumers who would benefit from the availability of

new and inexpensive information delivery systems.

When the scarcity rationale was abandoned, the rationale for providing special

protections for the broadcast industry might also have been abandoned if the industry

had not been so successful in arguing that broadcasting would soon be an endangered

species in a more competitive market. Broadcasters were able to convince legislators

that digital broadcasting offered a substantial public benefit that could be realized only

through substantial investments on the part of existing broadcasters. Legislators

agreed; consequently, broadcasters were given free access to expanded spectrum

space. However, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 contained a provision that

broadcasters would be required to *give back* the increased spectrum allocations when

and if digital television viewership ever reaches 85% (Aufderheide, 1999).

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 also reduced any restrictions on national

radio station ownership, and it relaxed local ownership restrictions allowing one entity

to own approximately half of the radio stations in one market (Aufderheide, 1999). At

this writing, a single broadcasting company cannot reach more than 35% of the

national audience, but in large markets, a single entity can own a television station and

a radio station or more than one television station or a television station and a cable

system. The act also extended the terms of license renewal to 8 years for both

television and radio, and it abolished comparative renewal proceedings unless the FCC

had previously found that a licensee is unfit. This provision effectively disabled one of

the most effective strategies employed by media reform advocates during the 1960s

and 1970s. When the NCCB encouraged local groups to challenge the renewal of

individual license holders, the public possessed the leverage that enabled them to

influence the programming decisions of local broadcasters. With so many channels of

media available to the public in the 1990s, legislators reasoned that the public no

longer had an interest in influencing programming delivered by local broadcasters. It

remains to be seen if this assumption is valid, but that local citizen groups no longer

have this strategy at their disposal should not go unnoticed.

The legislators, industry representatives, and public interest advocates who

influenced the content of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 reasoned that the

public interest in developing new technologies that will allow the United States to

create an economy based on the delivery of information services outweighed any

public interest in monitoring the content of mass media (Aufderheide, 1999; Levi,

2000; Meyerson, 1997). Although Bagdikian (2000) and McChesney (1999) argued

that the diversity of viewing options available to contemporary consumers is really a

subterfuge for only one possible perspective that can be maintained while living in an

advanced state of U.S. capitalism, the fact remains that there are *more* options

available to consumers than there were during the period when the NCCB was most

active.

On any given night of the week, a viewer can watch an infinite variety of

public affairs programs. Although it is doubtful that Johnson would endorse many of

these programs, at least shows like *Dateline*, *20/20*, or *60 Minutes* attempt to address

issues that contribute to the national public discourse. Most cable subscribers can

receive one or both of the two C-Span networks that capture live coverage of

congressional debates, press conferences, and the everyday affairs of government; this

was not an option in 1975. Many local television stations produce civic dialogue type

shows, and while they are rarely scheduled during prime time, a consumer now has the

option of taping them and viewing them later.

Because many members of the public believe that the current media

environment offers many options, the public has chosen to focus its attention on other

issues that are seen as more relevant in the 21st century (Aufderheide, 1999; Levi,

2000; Meyerson, 1997). Although Johnson and the NCCB have tried to focus public

attention on the harmful effects of violent programming on network television, parents now have the option of installing V-Chips on television sets to block objectional programming. The public has also expressed an interest in filtering out objectional programming delivered over the Internet to schools, libraries, and other publicly accessible institutions. Public officials and software manufacturers have attempted to address these concerns.

Another contemporary public telecommunication policy issue that activists and individual citizens have begun to address is related to the proliferation of personal information that is available over the Internet (Aufderheide, 1999). The security of electronic databases and issues related to who has access to them are perhaps a more pressing concern to the public than is the public's concern over the regulation broadcasting content.

<u>Recommendations</u>

The arguments advanced by the media reform movement of the late 1960s and 1970s and, therefore, the arguments advanced by the NCCB still resonate in contemporary public discourse. However, just as the idea of democracy is a continuing work in progress, the concept of a more democratic and participatory form of mass media is also a process of discovery. Constitutional scholars interpret the historical record for perspectives that can enlighten current legal discourse. Citizens who support media reform in the 21st century would likewise benefit from similar examinations of the archival records of previous media reform movements.

The Internet has rekindled the concept of a public sphere and allows anyone

with access to it to make his or her own media (Fang, 1995). Alternative organizations

flourish on the Internet. In fact, many citizens have chosen to subscribe to listservers

that distribute information not available elsewhere (Coopman, 2000a). Many people

have chosen to explore this alternative form of mass communication that may yet

develop into the type of responsive democratic media that Johnson envisioned when

he assumed his position at the NCCB (Aufderheide, 1999). It would be a mistake to

conclude that the efforts of the NCCB and other media reform activists in the 1960s

and 1970s were completely in vain. A wider definition of success is called for, one

that recognizes the possibility that citizen groups can contribute to the public discourse

by offering diverse perspectives on contemporary policy issues.

The current structure of the media market has redefined the parameters of what

constitutes the public interest, and it has also presented new telecommunication policy

issues that interest the public. If contemporary media reform groups wish to resurrect a

movement that will engage a substantial portion of the public, these groups will have

to confront the issues that the contemporary media market has brought to the forefront.

Groups like the Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility and the Benton

Foundation have attempted to address issues such as universal access to information

technology, property rights in cyberspace, and how to protect individual privacy rights

in cyberspace (Aufderheide, 1999). The public telecommunications policy issues have

changed since the 1970s, and they will keep changing, but the need to engage in public

discussion of these issues has not changed since Johnson urged the public to talk back

to their television sets.

Coalitions among the hundreds of independent groups interested in various

aspects of media reform need to be created. Organizations like the Independent Media Center, RMMW, Citizens for Independent Public Broadcasting, Prometheus Radio Group, and especially the growing number of academicians who are studying public telecommunications have common interests that are more likely to be heard if alliances can be created. Any one of the aforementioned groups who claim to represent a national constituency could take on the responsibility of providing geographically dispersed groups with relevant news, analysis, and expertise in the broad arena of media reform. *access* was an attempt to provide a forum for the exchange of the type of information that served to unite the movement in the 1970s. A similar type of trade journal would be considerably less time-consuming and more cost effective to produce and distribute over the Internet. Internet distribution also could allow many more people to access information than would ever have had the opportunity to read *access*.

Although it may be unrealistic to hope that charismatic, passionate, and dedicated leaders like Nicholas Johnson will step up to lead the contemporary media reform movement, it is not unrealistic to assume that there are people who can be equally creative in their ability to manipulate mainstream media in order to call attention to media reform issues. A charismatic leader like Johnson can generate the visibility that a reform movement needs to bring contemporary communication policy issues into the public discourse. The issues addressed may be different, but the strategy remains the same. Many citizens are extremely critical of the media, but most do not know that there are organizations that are working to rectify some of the problems. The average citizen needs to be educated. The single most important

principle that guided the NCCB was the acknowledgment that no other single goal could be accomplished without an ongoing public media education campaign. Johnson believes that the only solution for media reformers will be found in education (N. Johnson, personal communication, December 22, 2000).

It is encouraging to note that there has been an academic resurgence of interest in exploring issues related to public telecommunications (Avery, 2001). There need to be more scholarly explorations of groups like the NCCB, which have been at least partially successful in achieving their goals. It would be useful for scholars to examine the archives of the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ to see how they were able to achieve their goals during the 1960s. It would be equally interesting to investigate the legal strategies that were employed by public interest law firms during this period. Specific to the subject of this study, a more comprehensive examination of the lobbying arm of the NCCB, the NCCL, would yield material that would contribute to the historical record. Similar studies of successful public interest lobbying groups could also be beneficial to contemporary reform groups.

REFERENCES

American Academy of Child Psychiatry. (1976). *Press release: Violence and its effects on child development*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

American Medical Association. (1976). *Press release: Announce funding*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Archer, G. L. (1938). *History of radio to 1926*. New York: American Historical Society, Inc.

Armstrong, D. (1981). *A trumpet to arms*. Boston: South End Press.

Aufderheide, P. (1991). Public television and the public sphere. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 8*, 168-183.

Aufderheide, P. (1999). *Communications policy and the public interest: The Telecommunications Act of 1996*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Avery, R. K. (2001). Exploring the expanding domain of public telecommunications research. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, (45)*3, 531-540.

Avery, R. K., Burrows, P. E., & Pincus, C. J. (1980). *Research index for NAEB journals*. Washington, DC: NAEB Public Telecommunications Press.

Avery, R. K., & Pepper, R. (1976). The evolution of the CPB-PBS relationship 1970-1973. *Public Telecommunications Review, 4*(5), 6-17.

Avery, R. K., & Pepper, R. (1979). Balancing the equation: Public radio comes of age. *Public Telecommunications Review, 7*(2), 19-30.

Bagdikian, B. H. (2000). *The media monopoly* (6th ed.). Boston: Beacon Press.

Bareiss, W. (1998). Public space, private face: Audience construction at a noncommercial radio station. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 15*, 405-422.

Barlow, W. (1988). Community radio in the U.S.: The struggle for a democratic

medium. *Media, Culture and Society, 10*(1), 81-105.

Barnouw, E. (1966). *A tower in Babel: A history of broadcasting in the United States: Vol. 1. to 1933*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Barnouw, E. (1968). *The golden web: A history of broadcasting in the United States: Vol. II. 1933-1953*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Barnouw, E. (1970). *The image empire: A history of broadcasting in the United States: Vol. 3. Since 1953*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Barzun, J., & Graff, H. F. (1977). *The modern researcher* (3rd ed.). San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

Baughman, J. L. (1981). *Warriors in the wasteland: The Federal Communications Commission and American television, 1958-1967*. Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, New York.

Benjamin, L. (1998). Working it out together: Radio policy from Hoover to the Radio Act of 1927. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 42*(2), 221-236.

Blakely, R. J. (1979). *To serve the public interest: Educational broadcasting in the United States*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Booth, J., & Lewis, P. M. (1990). *The invisible medium: Public, commercial, and community radio*. Washington, DC: Howard University Press.

Boy wonder. (1907, November 3) *The New York Times*, p. 5.

Branscomb, A. W., & Savage, M. (1978). The broadcast reform movement at the crossroads. *Journal of Communication, 28*(4), 25-34.

Brown, L. (1971). *Television: The business behind the box*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.

Calhoun, C. (1997). Introduction: Habermas and the public sphere. The media and the public sphere. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. 1-50). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Cambridge Research Company. (1976). *Proposal for research*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carnegie Commission. (1979). *A public trust: The report of the Carnegie Commission on the future of public broadcasting*. New York: Bantam Books.

Carpenter, T. (1976a). *Restructure access memorandum*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carpenter, T. (1976b). *Direct mail memorandum*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carpenter, T. (1976c). *Priorities memorandum*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carpenter, T. (1976d). *Violence monitoring participant memorandum*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carpenter, T. (1976e). *Activities*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carpenter, T. (1976f). *Letter to board members*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carpenter, T. (1977a). *Program rationale, October 12*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carpenter, T. (1977b). *Activities report, August*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carpenter, T. (1977c). *The Wizard of Oz, March 2*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carpenter, T. (1977d). *Press release: College of Criminal Instruction, May 12*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carpenter, T. (1977e). *Letter to Archa Knowlton, July 25*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Carpenter, T. (1977f). *Memorandum to board of directors*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Chisholm, S. (1976). *Press release: Support of NCCB public affairs proposal, March 10*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

The clamor against TV violence gets results: Networks and agencies are finding it harder to shrug off critics. (1977, January 10). *Business Week*, pp. 19-22.

Coopman, T. M. (2000a). U.S. v. Dunifer: A case study of microbroadcasting. *Journal of Radio Studies, 7*(2), 287-309.

Coopman, T. M. (2000b). *High speed access: Microradio, action, and activism on the Internet* [On-line]. Available: http://www.roguecom.com

Craver & Company. (1976). *Fund-raising and management audit*.

Czitrom, D. J. (1982). *Media and the American mind: From Morse to McLuhan*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Day, J. (1995). *The vanishing vision: The inside story of public television*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Douglas, S. (1987). *Inventing American broadcasting, 1899-1922*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dunifer, S., & Sakolsky, R. (1998). *Seizing the airwaves: A free radio handbook*. San Francisco: A. K. Press.

Engelman, R. (1996). *Public radio and television in America: A political history*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Fang, N. (1995). The Internet as a public sphere: A Habermasian approach. *Dissertation Abstracts International*. (UMI No. 9315947)

Friendly, F. W. (1967). *Due to circumstances beyond our control*. New York: Random House.

Garnham, N. (1990). *Capitalism and communication: Global culture and the economics of information*. London: Sage Publications.

Garnham, N. (1997). The media and the public sphere. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. 359-376). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Gould, J. (1966, July 3). The president's stand: On the FCC, education. *New York Times*, p. 1.

Graham, E. (1977, April 5). Screening violence: Stung by criticism, some firms pull ads off rough TV shows. *The Wall Street Journal*, pp. 1, 34.

Grubb, M. V. (1996, August). *Nicholas Johnson: The public's defender on the Federal Communication Commission, 1966-1973*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Anaheim, CA.

Grundfest, J. A. (1976). *Citizen participation in broadcast licensing before the FCC*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation.

Howley, K. (1999). Finding a spot on the dial: The struggle for community radio in Bloomington, Indiana. *Journal of Radio Studies, 6*(1), 41-55.

Hoynes, W. (1994). *Public television for sale: Media, the market, and the public sphere*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

International Society of Chiefs of Police. (1977). *Statement against televised violence*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1967). *How to talk back to your television set*. Boston: Atlantic-Little, Brown Books.

Johnson, N. (1969). *Transcript of speech to the NCCB*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1973a). *Letter to activists, November 12*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1973b). *Position paper for planning*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1973c). *Development of national support organization*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1973d). *Letter to friends and family, December 5*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1974a). *Letter to friends and family*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1974b). *Communication coalition*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1974c). *Letter to board of directors, March 6*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1974d). *Memorandum to board of directors, April*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1974e). *Letter to friends and family, October*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1974f). *Letter to supporters, July 21*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa

Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1974g). *Project of the NCCB, May 17*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975a). *Letter to friends and family, July*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975b). *Letter to broadcasters in Ohio and Michigan*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975c). *Letter to contributors, July 21*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975d). *Insider's Newsletter, August 1*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975e). *Insider's Newsletter, August 25*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975f). *Promotional advice memorandum, October 1, Insider's Newsletter, August 1*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975g). *Management plan memorandum, October 6*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975h). *Access memorandum, October 6*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975i). *Summary of foundation proposal memorandum, October 20*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975j). *Insider's Newsletter memorandum, October 21*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975k). *Insider's Newsletter, October 1*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975l). *Insider's Newsletter, November 7*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975m). *Dear NCCB member, November 27*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975n). *Insider's Newsletter, December 1*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975o). *Insider's Newsletter, December 1*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975p). *Insider's Newsletter, September 1*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1975q). *Proposed advisory board memorandum, July 15*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1976a). *Insider's Newsletter, January 5*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1976b). *Administrative responsibilities of Ted Carpenter memorandum to board of directors, July 15*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1976c). *Dear friends, July 22*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1976d). *Invitation to program evaluation meeting, September*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1976e). *Letter to editor of advertising age, September 6*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977a). *Annual activities report to board of directors, 1976-1977*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977b). *Continuing role*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977c). *Alternative funding proposals, November 28*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977d). *Dear friends of the NCCB, December 5*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977e). *Funding memorandum to the board of directors, November 11*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977f). *Dear NCCB supporter, September*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977g). *Insider's Newsletter, November 28*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977h). *Activities report, August*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977i). *Insider's Newsletter, September 1*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977j). *Insider's Newsletter, April*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977k). *Draft, Insider's Newsletter, April 15*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977l). *Insider's Newsletter, December 1*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977m). *Draft membership appeal, June 16*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977n). *You are invited, May*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977o). *Insider's Newsletter, October 5*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1977p). *Publications proposal, October*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (1978). *Insider's Newsletter, October 5*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Johnson, N. (2001a). Available: http://www.nicholasjohnson.org

Johnson, N. (2001b). Available: www.uiowa.edu/~cyberlaw/biblio/bibmpage.html

Junker, H. (1971, April 1). The greening of Nicholas Johnson. *Rolling Stone*, pp. 32-39.

Kahn, F. J. (Ed.). (1968). *Documents of American broadcasting*. New York: Meredith Corporation.

Kahn, F. J. (Ed.). (1984). *Documents of American broadcasting* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Korn, G. E. (1991). *Everett C. Parker and the citizen media reform movement: A phenomenological life history*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Carbondale.

Krasnow, E. G., Longley, L. D., & Terry, H. A. (1982). *The politics of broadcast regulation* (3rd ed.). New York: St. Martin's Press.

Laser, M. (1999). *Pacifica radio: The rise of an alternative network*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Lebec, D. (1999, March). *Nicholas Johnson: Maverick FCC commissioner, 1966-1973*. Paper presented at the National Broadcasting Society Convention, Huntington, WV.

Ledbetter, J. (1997). *Made possible by. . . . The death of public broadcasting in the United States*. New York: Verso.

Levi, L. (2000, May). Viacom-CBS merger: Reflections on the FCC's recent approach to structural regulation of the electronic mass media. *Federal Communications Law Journal*, pp. 581-610.

Linder, L. R. (1999). *Public access television: America's electronic soapbox*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Mander, M. S. (1984). The public debate about broadcasting in the twenties: An interpretive history. *Journal of Communication, 28*(2), 167-185.

McChesney, R. (1993). *Telecommunications, mass media, and democracy: The battle for control of U.S. broadcasting, 1928-1935*. New York: Oxford University Press.

McChesney, R. (1999). *Rich media, poor democracy: Communication politics in dubious times*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

McGannon, D. H. (1976). *Letter from president of Westinghouse Broadcasting Company to NCCB endorsing public affairs proposal*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Meyerson, M. I. (1997). Ideas of the marketplace: A guide to the 1996 Telecommunications Act. *Federal Communications Law Journal, 49*, 251-280.

Milam, L. W. (1975). *Sex and broadcasting*. Los Gatos, CA: Dildo Press.

Milam, L. W. (1986). *The radio papers: From KRAB to KCHU*. San Diego, CA: MHO & MHO Works.

Minow, N. M. (1965). *Equal time: The private broadcaster and the public interest* (L. Laurent, Ed.). New York: Atheneum.

Minow, N. M., & LaMay, C. L. (1995). *Abandoned in the wasteland: Children, television, and the First Amendment*. New York: Hill and Wang.

Mosco, V. (1979). Political power and public access. *Public Telecommunication Review, 7*(4), 6-13.

National Parents and Teachers Association. (1976). *Press release: National PTA launches massive project on TV violence*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1973a). *Stern paper*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1973b). *Meeting briefing, November 12*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1974a). *Demystifying broadcasting*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1974b). *Report and proposal, October*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1974c). *Board meeting, January*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1974d). *Minutes from January board of directors meeting*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1974e). *Activities, Appendix D*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1974f). *Rationale*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1974g). *access, November*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975a). *Capsule history*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special

Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975b). *The growing media reform effort*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975c). *Levinson Foundation proposal*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975d). *Activities report to board of directors, April 2*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975e). *Citizens' communication reform movement: A report and proposal*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975f). *Goals, programs and projects*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975g). *Public affairs proposal program, July 23*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975h). *Press release: Support First Amendment, April 22*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975i). *Press release: Oppose Wells, August 25*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975j). *Press release: Spot tithe time, October 23*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975k). *Description, September*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975l). *Public affairs proposal: Research data*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975m). *Minutes from board meeting, January*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975n). *Direct mail memorandum*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975o). *Minutes from board meeting, April*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975p). *Minutes from board meeting, May*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975q). *Minutes from board meeting, June*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975r). *Minutes from board meeting, July*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975s). *Minutes from board meeting, September*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975t). *Minutes from board meeting, October*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975u). *Minutes from board meeting, December*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975v). *Senator Pastore*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975w). *Draft for access*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975x). *Press release: Former FCC commissioner unfit, August 25*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975y). *Press release, August 13*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1975z). *Minutes from board meeting, February*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976a). *Funding proposals*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976b). *Letter to Congress: Public service announcements*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976c). *Ohio/Michigan television performance: An analysis and ranking*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976d). *Philadelphia public affairs program*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976e). *Program plan*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976f). *Press conference: Violence*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976g). *Prime time violence profiles*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976h). *Public affairs proposal: Research data, January 20*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976i). *NCCB bylaws, May 4*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976j). *Minutes from board of directors meeting, July*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976k). *Press release: Citizen group shows advertiser support of violence*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976l). *Violence project*, July. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976m). *Prime time violence profiles, BI Associates*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976n). *Station manager questionnaire*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976o). *Public affairs programming proposal, March*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976p). *Audience rating project, February 6*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976q). *NCCB and the structure of media reform*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976r). *Violence symposia agenda*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976s). *Press release: Who sponsors fall violence? December 16*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976t). *Media watch, April*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976u). *Minutes from board meeting, December*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1976v). *Special projects*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977a). *Communications policy: The public agenda*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977b). *PTA hearings*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977c). *Citizen's media directory*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977d). *Interim violence ranking proposal*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977e). *National advisory board*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977f). *Proposal to profile attitudes toward public broadcasting*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977g). *Program rationale*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977h). *College of criminal instruction*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977i). *Press release: Take charge of your TV*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977j). *California project*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977k). *License renewal package*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special

Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977l). *Staff report and recommendations, December 13*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977m). *Foundation report for board of directors, December 13*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977n). *NCCB information sheet*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977o). *Advisory board file*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977p). *California project calendar*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977q). *The TV viewer marketplace*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977r). *Staff report*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977s). *Communication policy*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB. (1977t). *Citizen group shows advertiser support of television violence*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

NCCB ties together advertisers and violent programs. (1976, August 2). *Broadcasting*, pp. 17-29.

Negroponte, N. (1996). *Being digital*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Nord, D. P., & Nelson, H. N. (1981). The logic of historical research. In G. H. Stemple & B. H. Westly (Eds.), *Research methods in mass communication* (pp. 278-305). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Ostrow, J. (1998, March 12). Newscast watchdogs hand Denver stations a warning. *The Denver Post*, p. E-01.

Ranly, D. P. (1976). *The challengers: Social pressure on the press 1965-1975*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, Columbia.

Ray, W. A. (1990). *The ups and downs of radio-TV regulation*. Ames, IA: Iowa State

University Press.

Rheingold, H. (1993). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Rowland, W. D., Jr. (1982). The illusion of fulfillment: The broadcast reform movement. *Journalism Monographs, 79*, 1-49.

Rubens, W. (1977). *Recent developments involving violence on television: A status report from the Department of Social Research and Corporate Planning*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Sarno, E. F. (1969). The national radio conferences. *Journal of Broadcasting, 8*(2), 189-202.

Schramm, W., Lyle, J., & Parker, E. B. (1961). *Television in the lives of our children*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Schumaker, K. (1975, November 24). *Dear Mr. Johnson*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Setlow, C. (1977). *Letter to board of directors, December 13*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Shales, T. (1977, February 23). TV's violent departure: Networks are reacting to increasing clamor for less televised mayhem. *Washington Post*, p. B7.

Shepherd, C. (1974a). *Status report*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Shepherd, C. (1974b). *Memorandum to board, May 17*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Shepherd, C. (1974c). *Press release, November 21*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Shepherd, C. (1976a). *access memorandum, September 28*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Shepherd, C. (1976b). *Letter to the board of directors, December 10*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Signorielli, N., & Eleey, M. (1976). *An evaluation of a system of continual monitoring and periodic reporting of commercial sponsorship of television violence*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Smith, M. Y. (1976, December 9). *Dear Daphene*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Special Collections, Nicholas Johnson Archives.

Smith, M. Y. (1982). The method of history. In G. H. Stemple & B. H. Westly (Eds.), *Research methods in mass communication* (pp. 305-320). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

Soley, L. (1999). *Free radio: Electronic civil disobedience*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Starr, J. M. (2000). *Air wars: The fight to reclaim public broadcasting*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Stavitsky, A. G. (1994). The changing conception of localism in U.S. public radio. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 38*(1), 19-33.

Stavitsky, A. G. (1995). "Guys in suits with charts:" Audience research in public radio. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 39*(2), 177-189.

Sterling, C. H., & Kittross, J. M. (1990). *Stay tuned: A concise history of American broadcasting* (2nd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Streeter, T. (1996). *Selling the air: A critique of the policy of commercial broadcasting in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Teenybopper on the FCC. (1967, March 23). *Broadcasting*, p. 27.

Telecommunications Research and Action Center (TRAC). (2001). Available: www.trac.org--http://www.trac.org?about/index.html

Wenner, L. A. (1975). *Citizen involvement in public television* (Report No. ED 123 676). Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa.

Witherspoon, J., Kovitz, R., Avery, R. K., & Stavitsky, A. G. (2000). *A history of public broadcasting*. Washington, DC: Current Publishing.

WKEF rapped hard in panel. (1975, August 8). *Dayton Daily News*, p. 50.

Yoder, A. (1996). *Pirate radio: The incredible saga of America's underground, illegal broadcasters*. Solena Beach, CA: Hightext Publications, Inc.