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The Newest, and Toughest, Policy Toward Programming

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Washington

AFTER TWO DAYS as a member of the national public broadcasting industry, Henry Loomis has announced a new perspective toward programming, including the controversial area of public affairs.

The new president of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting recently told top industry officials that the CPB has in the past "tried to do too much," impracticality and it wasn't successful.

In a separate session before the PBS board of directors meeting here and in a half-hour nationwide closed-circuit broadcast with the network's 225 stations, Loomis said:

- "The CPB, formerly only management "umbrella," for public broadcasting, will take a stronger role in determining daily program content over the nationwide PBS network.
- "Instant analysis" and other public affairs programming techniques that mimic commercial TV practices probably will be dropped.
- Long-range financing for public broadcasting will not be pushed for at least several years.
- While it eventually should be part of the public TV role, funding is currently at a satisfactory level.
- "The cultural field" and programs directed at a "specialized" audience rather than large audiences, should be stressed.

Loomis' views are virtually identical to those of the Nixon administration and congressional opponents of public TV over the last year. His appointment as CPB chairman last month.

As Loomis sees it, the corporation founded in 1968 should be pleased with its present 30 percent annual growth. Current funding is $5 million dollars. "It's possible to get too much too soon," while staff excellence and expertise lags, he told the PBS board.

Following Loomis' appearances, industry sources took a wait-and-see attitude. They stressed that he must not have time to be properly briefed since accepting the $5,500-a-year job, which he started officially on Oct. 1.

Loomis told a reporter later that he approached the job following the resignation of John Macy Jr. as CPB president in August, he had asked, "What the hell is happening?"

An independently wealthy man, Loomis said he had long regarded his previous service in important posts in the Departments of Defense, Health, Education and Welfare, U.S. Information Agency and at the White House during the last 31 years as "experiences." "I always considered myself what the British call a permanent undersecretary," he said.

"But four years ago (when Mr. Nixon appointed him to the U.S. Information Agency) I changed. Mr. Nixon was my hero in 1960 and I feel very strongly about it this election year.""In hinting that the "instant analysis" of major political events will be dropped, he said public affairs programing should only "supplement and enrich" what is offered by commercial networks. He later told a reporter that he was "concerned about the propriety of using public funds to be competitive with commercial networks in any area of broadcasting."

Loomis asked PBS station managers if they wanted "much more" in the cultural field. The role of public broadcasting is to direct programming to a specialized, not a mass, audience, he said. An example would be "a program of an excellent cultural nature that is too expensive for the commercial networks to do."

Loomis' remarks Wednesday were in line with Nixon administration criticism of public television beginning last October with an attack by Dr. Clay T. Whitehead, director of the Office of Telecommunication Policy.

The CPB was formed in 1963, a year after President Lyndon Johnson successfully backed a public broadcasting bill. Under Macy, the new corporation took over what had been the loose-knit educational TV network and, as PBS, with Federal equipment and programming money, grew to the present 225 TV stations and hundreds of public radio outlets.

Last fall, the political road fell in on Macy. PBS laid the Ford Foundation down, pushed through a public affairs bill in Washington. The National Public Affairs Center for Television promptly hired liberal correspondents and Robert MacNeil at high salaries, which drew even Democratic criticism in Congress.

A series of controversial network shows, as well as marked increase in the PBS national audience, attracted further notice for the public network. In June, Mr. Nixon voted a two-year $5 million dollar authorization for CPB. Macy, in ill health, subsequently resigned, along with other top CPB aides.

By John Carmody

Taking a stronger role in determining daily program content on PBS