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Television Takes Education to the People

TELEVISION can make the home a classroom. The possibilities have already been tapped in a limited way through commercial stations. Some 800 people registered in an elementary psychology course over TV in Cleveland. Principles of physics are being taught over the air in Phoenix, Arizona. During the past year some 15 telecast courses with credit were offered in the U. S. The *Johns Hopkins Science Review*, reaching over half a million viewers, and the science programs of the California Academy of Sciences, present science in a way that entertains as well as educates. A U.S. Office of Education survey reveals that 84 colleges and 58 school systems have been sponsoring TV programs.

The possibilities for the education of the public at all ages have been extended to virtually every corner of the country by the reservation of 245 frequencies by the Federal Communications Commission for non-commercial educational television stations. Thus far, formal applications have been received from 47 communities and 20 have already been approved. KUHT in Houston, the first noncommercial station, began to telecast on May 25. St. Louis and Los Angeles will soon be on the air. In scores of other communities, citizens and civic organizations are working tirelessly to secure funds and lay sound plans for making applications. The FCC has placed no time limit on the reservation of these channels, but in three instances commercial interests have requested the reassignment of educational frequencies to private use. In one, after the FCC turned down their three applications for the Milwaukee educational channel, the Hearst Radio Corporation instituted court action.

Two groups, with generous support from the Ford Foundation, have been working to help communities take advantage of this golden opportunity. The National Citizens Committee for Educational Television

was established to help civic groups organize their efforts and raise funds to build stations.

The cooperation of educational groups of all kinds has been spearheaded by the Joint Committee on Educational Television. Its sponsoring organizations are: American Council on Education, Association for Education by Radio-Television, Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, National Association of Educational Broadcasters, National Association of State Universities, National Council of Chief State School Officers, and National Education Association. This committee assists in engineering and legal problems, in the filing of applications, and in programming. With stations built and building, programming is of prime importance. Community program committees are already planning to tap all their resources—schools, colleges, foundations, orchestras, and museums.

To make the best of these efforts available to a nation-wide audience, the Ford Foundation's Fund for Adult Education has established the Educational Television and Radio Center in Chicago. The Center will serve as a clearing house for program ideas and recorded programs. Let us suppose that the educational station in Houston produces a fine scientific program. This program will be recorded and sent to the Center where it will be made available to educational stations throughout the nation. The Center will also help, in a limited number of cases, to finance the production of especially good programs, provided of course that they are recorded and made available to all noncommercial stations.

At a time when greater public understanding of science and its aims is of utmost importance, scientists have both an obligation and an opportunity to lend support to this important educational movement. They can actively aid efforts to establish educational TV stations, and particularly, they can help in the development of sound, interesting science programs.

JOHN A. BEHNKE

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