

Statement of FCC Commissioner James H. Quello
(In which Commissioner Abbott Washburn joins)

Re: Reorganization of the Broadcast Bureau of the
Federal Communications Commission

November 6, 1979

Back in 1961, at the urging of then Chairman Newton Minow, the Commission established the Educational Broadcasting Branch. The Branch was established with the mandate of "being responsible for the performance of all functions of the Broadcast Bureau relating to the compilation of information, the conduct of studies and making of recommendations relating to educational broadcast services and serving as a clearinghouse of information for and liaison with private and governmental groups interested in or involved with educational broadcasting." Although, in my opinion, it has always been understaffed, the Branch has striven mightily to perform those tasks with considerable success.

Today, a majority of the Commission approved a reorganization proposal which abolishes the Educational Broadcasting Branch and, in its place, assigns one individual to the Policy and Rules Division to deal with Educational Broadcasting, among other things. We are assured that this action does not constitute a downgrading of the Commission's interest in and concern for educational broadcasting. The facts, however, would appear to be clearly to the contrary. The facts are that the Commission is unwilling to devote the necessary resources to sustain even a branch-level entity to deal with educational broadcasting matters. The facts are that there will no longer be any recognizable entity within the Commission charged with responsibility of concentrating expertise and resources to deal explicitly with the problems and interests of the educational broadcasting community. It is rather ironic that a Commission majority is choosing to downgrade educational broadcasting just as the President has chosen to further emphasize the role of education in this country through his very active leadership in establishing a separate Department of Education.

I'm confident that some of my colleagues did not raise objections to the Bureau reorganization plan since it is an "internal" matter of administrative convenience and does not affect policy. My view, on the contrary, is that policy has been very much affected and that the special needs and interests of educational broadcasting are being viewed by the Commission with diminished concern. The evidence is there for all to see, "less-is-more" metaphysics notwithstanding.

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