

Comments by
Commissioner James H. Quello
for the Golden Mike Award
Plaza Hotel, New York City
February 21, 1991

Again, I'm delighted to be with you, my fellow broadcast pioneers, to participate in this significant Golden Mike award ceremony for the distinguished pioneer station WOAI, San Antonio and to my valued friend, Lowry Mays, Chairman of Clear Channel Communications and this year for the second year, Chairman of the Joint NAB Board.

Now is a particularly auspicious time for such an award. It comes as the communications world is literally changing before our eyes -- almost as quickly as the rate of political change in the world. As we are entering what President Bush calls a "New World Order," we also face an unprecedented range of vital policy choices in telecommunications. Perhaps I should refer to it as a "New Communications Order."

Elements of this New Communications Order include the following:

-- Because of satellite links, the conflict in the Persian Gulf is proving to be the first war in which the fighting is being presented to American audiences in "real time." This phenomenon is highlighting the capabilities, as well as the need for press responsibility, in the use of new communications technologies.

-- Various joint ventures are racing to provide a true DBS service. Will this provide the long-awaited multichannel competitor to cable television?

-- Various parties have applied for authorization for DAB-digital audio broadcasting. Once spectrum and other technical problems are resolved, this new technology could eliminate interference problems and greatly enhance the quality of radio broadcasting.

-- An FCC advisory committee is evaluating various HDTV systems, with a goal of selecting an industry standard. Just as DAB promises to revolutionize radio, HDTV will have a profound effect on video broadcasting.

-- Telephone companies (and others) are seeking permission to provide video and computer age services via fiber optics.

-- Some of the proposed changes literally turn our traditional view of communications on its head. Increasingly, via cellular telephone and proposed personal communication networks, telephone service is being delivered over-the-air. At the same time, many of the services we normally think of as over-the-air services are being delivered by wire, and perhaps, in the future, by fiber.

Perhaps it is a bit early to call this a New Communications Order. We are very much in a state of transition. But then, change is one factor we will all have to learn to live with. As we go through the transition, I believe that broadcasters who have pioneered the services or who have substantial investments should have a priority in implementing advanced technologies.

But despite all that is happening, there are some things that never change. One of the constants is the contribution made by a bedrock system of local broadcasting. Broadcasting has always provided, and continues to provide an information and entertainment product that is unmatched anywhere in the world. Of course, none of the advances we are seeing today would be possible without the contributions of the broadcasting industry, and particularly broadcast leaders like Lowry Mays.

It is quite a tightrope we are walking: seeking to promote the new while preserving the old. But you can rest assured that the Commission -- and particularly this Commissioner -- will give it his best shot.

Of course, tonight, we are here to honor the singular achievements of Lowry Mays and WOAI. I have with me today a true copy of the original FCC license for WOAI back in 1922 to present for your company archives.

It is particularly pleasing that this pioneer license is in such good hands. Clear Channel Communications has proven a most worthy custodian of this distinguished pioneer radio station. Your stewardship has been characterized by dedicated adherence to quality, integrity and responsibility in programming and management.

So my heartiest congratulations to Lowry Mays, Chairman of Clear Channel Communications and best wishes for continued success and broadcast leadership in the exciting years ahead.

If we are to maintain this nation's communications leadership position, we must all remember the broadcaster's goal of public service is a vital part of the FCC's overall goal . . . of industry and government working together in a constructive spirit of mutual cooperation. In this spirit of cooperation, we assure that Americans continue to be the best informed and best served people in the world.