

OPENING REMARKS BY CHAIRMAN JAMES H. QUELLO

FCC OPEN MEETING - FEBRUARY 11, 1993

WELCOME TO THE FIRST MONTHLY FCC MEETING WITH A PRESIDENT CLINTON APPOINTED INTERIM CHAIRMAN. AS ALL OF YOU KNOW, IT IS NOT A NEW OR YOUNG FACE. IT IS AN APPRECIATIVE FACE AND I HOPE THE AARP WILL REMEMBER THAT PRESIDENT CLINTON APPOINTED A CITIZEN IN HIS GOLDEN YEARS -- NO, IN HIS PLATINUM YEARS, TO A PRESTIGIOUS POST. I'M HONORED AND WILL DO MY BEST WITH MY COLLEAGUES TO MAINTAIN A STEADY STABLE COURSE IN DECIDING THE REGULAR FCC STREAM OF ISSUES AND PROBLEMS UNTIL A PERMANENT CHAIRMAN IS SELECTED AND CONFIRMED. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO THE PERMANENT APPOINTMENTS SO WE WILL HAVE A FULL COMPLEMENT TO WEIGH THE CHALLENGING, COMPLEX MULTI-CHANNEL, MULTI-FACETED FUTURE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN AMERICA.

IN THE MEANTIME WE ARE DESTINED TO BE MORE A "REPORT AND ORDER" THAN A CARETAKER COMMISSION BECAUSE WE MUST COMPLY WITH THE CONGRESSIONAL DEADLINES OF THE 1992 CABLE ACT. THE UNDERSTAFFED MASS MEDIA BUREAU HAS THE FORMIDABLE TASK OF DEVELOPING THE UPCOMING REPORT AND ORDERS FOR COMMISSION REVIEW AND APPROVAL BY APRIL. THE FCC MUST ENSURE THE LANDMARK ACT IS WORKABLE AND FAIR TO ALL CONCERNED. THE SPECIFIC IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CABLE ACT FOR THE MARCH AND APRIL AGENDA WILL BE VERY SIGNIFICANT FOR THE AMERICAN CONSUMER AND THE CABLE, BROADCASTING, TELEPHONE AND SATELLITE INDUSTRIES. SO STAY TUNED.

I ALSO WANT TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO REMIND CONGRESS THAT THOMAS JEFFERSON'S SENTENTIOUS SAYING IS PARTICULARLY APPLICABLE TODAY -- "THE EXECUTION OF LAWS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE MAKING OF THEM." ONCE THE ACT IS IN EFFECT, WE WILL NEED MORE PERSONNEL TO EFFECTIVELY EXECUTE THE ACT -- LACKING THAT, WE WILL DO THE BEST WE CAN WITH WHAT WE GOT.

AS I MENTIONED AT THE RECENT NATPE CONVENTION, I AM AN EXPONENT OF THE CREDO THAT ALL FIVE COMMISSIONERS ARE CREATED EQUAL. HOWEVER, SECTION 5 OF THE COMMUNICATIONS ACT SPECIFICALLY STATES ". . . THE CHAIRMAN SHALL BE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE COMMISSION." IN THE FINAL COUNTDOWN, EACH COMMISSIONER'S VOTE CARRIES THE SAME WEIGHT. THE CHAIRMAN DOES HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING APPOINTED THE ADMINISTRATIVE HEAD OF THE AGENCY. HE IS THE FOCUS OF PUBLIC INQUIRIES, TELEPHONE CALLS, CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHTS AND TAKES MOST OF THE BLAME OR CREDIT FOR COMMISSION ACTIONS. FOR THIS ADDED RESPONSIBILITY, HE IS ENTITLED TO ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL AND TO RECOMMEND KEY BUREAU APPOINTMENTS. AS YOU KNOW, THE CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE IS THE VEHICLE THROUGH WHICH THE STAFF INITIATES AGENDA ITEMS AND PROPOSES COURSES OF ACTION SUBJECT TO MAJORITY REVIEW AND APPROVAL. IN THIS REGARD, WE ARE BLESSED WITH DEDICATED, EXPERIENCED BUREAU CHIEFS AND THEIR STAFFS.

IN SHORT, I DON'T HAVE ANY DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR AT BEING CHAIRMAN OR INTERIM CHAIRMAN. I HAVE SEEN MANY GOOD CHAIRMEN AND COMMISSIONERS COME AND GO OVER THE PAST 18 YEARS. ALSO, I ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT CHAIRMAN JOHN DINGELL WARNED ME IN 1974 -- "WHY DO YOU WANT THE DAMN JOB? YOU WILL BE BEAT UP BY CONGRESS AND OVERRULED IN COURT." IN HIS CASE, THE CONGRESSIONAL PART BECAME A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY. HOWEVER, BETWEEN THOSE TRYING PERIODS, THERE HAVE BEEN YEARS OF SIGNIFICANT PRODUCTIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS. THE FUTURE CHALLENGES ARE EXCITING WITH THE PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ONCOMING ADVANCED TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORLD OF TELECOMPUTING, FIBER OPTICS, DIGITAL AUDIO BROADCASTING, HIGH DEFINITION TV, INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, SATELLITE TRANSMISSION, AND CELLULAR AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES, ETC.

OUR DECISIONS IN THESE AND OTHER MATTERS WILL DIRECTLY AFFECT NOT ONLY THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE BUT, MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE BENEFITS AMERICANS ARE ABLE TO DERIVE FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND SERVICE. I AM PROFOUNDLY SENSITIVE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DECISIONS WE WILL BE ASKED TO MAKE, AND I WILL LOOK FORWARD TO, AND RELY UPON, WORKING CLOSELY AND CONSENSUALLY WITH MY COLLEAGUES ON THE COMMISSION TO DRAFT POLICY AS WE GO FORWARD.

WITH THE WONDERS OF THE MULTI-CHANNEL WORLD AND DIRECT BROADCAST SATELLITE SERVICE UPON US, I STILL BELIEVE THE PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE ALL-IMPORTANT FREE UNIVERSAL BROADCAST SERVICE FOR ALL AMERICANS AS ADVOCATED BY CONGRESS WILL REMAIN THE UNDERLYING BEDROCK OF AMERICAN MASS COMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATION AND REGULATION FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. ADHERENCE TO THIS ALL ENCOMPASSING PRINCIPLE WILL HAVE A PROFOUND EFFECT ON FUTURE LEGISLATION AND REGULATION OF BROADCAST, CABLE, TELEPHONE AND SATELLITE INDUSTRIES.

IN A NUTSHELL AND GENERALIZED, THE FCC MUST FOSTER COMPETITION IN A PRACTICABLE MANNER, BUT APPRECIATE THAT MORE IS NOT NECESSARILY BETTER. CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE AND AFFORDABILITY SHOULD BE A PRIME CONSIDERATION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AND MULTI-CHANNEL SERVICES. WE MUST ALLOCATE SCARCE SPECTRUM FOR NEW TECHNOLOGIES, PROTECT AGAINST INTERFERENCE AND PROTECT RATEPAYERS FROM PREDATORY PRICING OR CROSS SUBSIDIES. FCC COMMISSIONERS ARE PAID BY PUBLIC FUNDS AND REPRESENT THE PUBLIC. WHENEVER PRIVATE INTERESTS CONFLICT WITH PUBLIC INTEREST, THE PUBLIC INTEREST MUST PREVAIL.

HOWEVER, I BELIEVE SUBSTANTIAL ADVANCEMENTS IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS CAN BEST BE EXPEDITED BY GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY WORKING TOGETHER IN A CONSTRUCTIVE SPIRIT OF MUTUAL COOPERATION. WITH A DEDICATED POSITIVE SPIRIT, WE ASSURE THAT AMERICANS CONTINUE TO BE THE BEST INFORMED, THE MOST GAINFULLY EMPLOYED AND BEST SERVED IN THE WORLD.