

Remarks by Commissioner James H. Quello

Before the

RTNDA

Washington, D.C. - April 6, 1994

Heartfelt thanks for this very prestigious and gratifying of what I humorously call my pre-posthumous awards. As a fugitive from the actuarial law of averages, as well as a former newsman, I especially appreciate receiving this distinctive honor while I'm here to enjoy it and enjoy your company. Someone told me its nice to get the flowers while you are still around to smell them.

This type of recognition is especially gratifying because I have been around long enough to have voted against everybody at least once. In fact, when I expressed similar appreciation for my widespread support in a reception following my fourth confirmation, the audience, composed mostly of unruly Washington lawyers and regulatory malcontents, yelled "twice." I even threatened them with "thrice." But this is all part of the give and take of government and industry.

As I mentioned after my last confirmation, everyone must remember that commissioners are paid by public funds and appointed to represent the public.

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So, if private interests conflict with the public interest, the public interest must prevail. I have also been compelled to occasionally remind some telecommunications leaders that no industry should consider itself more influential or more powerful than the government acting in the public interest.

Fortunately, the great majority of broadcasters take pride in supporting the public interest standard and in good faith objective presentation of the news. They consider public service requirements and responsible news presentations as a natural opportunity for vital civic service. In doing so, they are worthy of Congressional and FCC support for universal free broadcast service.

It is true that broadcasting, and initially news, was my primary lifetime career. I have an inherent interest in its continuing vitality and growth. I want to be justifiably proud of my heritage and a great majority of time I am. In my experience, I have found an overwhelming majority of broadcasters and newscasters socially responsible, worthy trustees who are doing an excellent job of presenting news. A very small percentage, through human error, carelessness and in a few extreme cases, disdain or arrogance, cause problems for the entire industry.

In my view, the most important challenge facing the FCC and Congress in the coming decade is to make certain our policies do not erode our nation's most valuable asset -- universal free TV and radio news available to all the public. Broadcasting is the most influential and most essential news media in a democracy that relies on an informed citizenry and electorate to maintain representative government.

I have said it before, but here I go again, in case there are people in the audience that haven't heard it before.

No transmission or semi-transmission pipeline, whether cable or a new electronic superhighway, should have the power to obstruct or prevent broadcasters from accessing the public they are licensed to serve. Moreover, vital news and public affairs service should be free to all the public to prevent our becoming a nation of information haves and have nots.

There are so many First Amendment subjects for discussion that I must defer to some more propitious time.

However, I would like to relate two experiences as a manager of a news oriented full service station that forcefully demonstrated the need for First Amendment rights. [CITE FLUORIDATION EDITORIALS; AND EQUAL TIME

REQUESTS FOR GOVERNOR FROM LABOR PARTY, LABOR UNION PARTY AND THE PROHIBITION PARTY] Eventually, I came to the conclusion that if we editorialized for God, mother and country, we would have to provide response time for atheism, bastardy and subversion.

Now for a brief mention of a subject I'm not suppose to talk about but everyone else does -- Infinity Broadcasting and Howard Stern.

Briefly, there have been four different unanimous votes by the Commission resulting in four notices of apparent liability and fines of approximately \$1,600,000 for repeated egregious offenses. They are being appealed in court. I think broadcasters and reporters have a right to be wrong. Most certainly a right to criticize and ridicule government officials, even a right to be insufferable smart-asses as I characterized the DJ's ridiculing the congressional pay raise a few years ago. But no one has the right to violate established indecency and obscenity laws.

Today there is an overwhelming public outcry against excessive, explicit, deviant sex and glamorized violence and brutality on the air. It requires responsible action by broadcasters and I'm glad to see constructive steps toward self-regulation by broadcasters.

I'm reminded of an award-time saying "The greater the gratitude the shorter the speech."

But before showing my gratitude by sitting down, I want you to know that rumors of my early demise via retirement are grossly exaggerated. I plan to serve out my remaining 2 years and 3-1/2 months, God and my wife willing.

Speaking of my wife, she merits some kind of award too. We have been married for 56 years which constitutes a rousing testimonial to her sense of humor. I have been lucky -- In all those years she never filed a petition to deny renewal. She admits she entertained murder several times, and I hope not dismemberment, but never divorce because it was against her Irish Catholic upbringing. She has been responsible for my maintaining a becoming sense of self unimportance. She threatens me with "One more goof like that and you will never make 57! She also tells everyone in Washington government she was happier being a broadcaster's wife than a commissioner's wife. I had to remind her I was much younger then. She is also very good at letting me have -- her way. Nevertheless, I really believe in marriage. If it weren't for marriage, many men would go through life thinking they had no faults at all. Besides with Mary, there is never a dull moment and we just don't have time to grow old.

Not only are retirement rumors premature, but I also have ambitions to be reappointed in July, 1996, as the first active wheelchair Commissioner now that I have actually witnessed wheelchair tennis. I've seen good tennis players in wheelchairs enjoying vigorous 2 bounce tennis -- thus maintaining a semi-fit mind in a fit body. So don't "Lame Duck" me too soon. I have already lived 7 years past the average life expectancy -- a source of annoyance to some -- I'm happy my physiology hasn't caught up to my chronology. In fact, I am energized by the exciting, contentious, upcoming communications developments with mind boggling possibilities for advanced technology services for the public.

So thanks for making this one of the most memorable events of my lifetime career. This treasured award will serve as a perpetual reminder of your thoughtfulness and of the outstanding accomplishments of broadcast news.

So my hat's off to you the American TV-radio newsmen. Through responsible use of your First Amendment freedom you have demonstrated the superiority of a free press to the world and you have given the American public the most comprehensive, most informative and by far the best overall TV and radio news service in the world. So keep up the good work. May your tribe increase.

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER
JAMES H. QUELLO

April 11, 1994

David Brinkley
c/o ABC News
1717 DeSales St., NW
Washington, DC 20036


Dear David,

Sharing the podium at the award dinner with a newscaster I respected and admired for years was a special honor for me. Your news insight, objectivity and plain old fashioned decency merit all the newscaster awards on this planet. My wife Mary, who was "flu positive" could not attend. She shares my sentiments and was disappointed in the lost opportunity of expressing herself personally to you.

Incidentally, I assure you -- the next time you go first.

Congratulations and best wishes for continued achievement.

Cordially,


James H. Quello

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
Carole Simpson
c/o ABC News
1717 DeSales St., NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Carole,

You did a masterful job of emceeding the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation Award. I appreciate, too, your thoughtfulness on my behalf.

Congratulations on an award winning performance yourself and best wishes for continued success.

Cordially,


James H. Quello

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER
JAMES H. QUELLO

April 11, 1994

Cokie Roberts
c/o ABC News
1717 DeSales St., NW
Washington, DC 20036

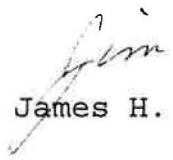
Dear Cokie,

Sharing the podium at the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation dinner with you was a special treat for me.

As I mentioned in my remarks, I believe you are a "star" find for ABC. Wife Mary, shares my admiration for your business-like good looks and for your independent insightful newscasts and panel appearances. She was "flu positive" that evening and could not attend. She was especially disappointed in the lost opportunity of visiting with you.

More power to you and best wishes for continued achievement in the exciting years ahead.

Cordially,


James H. Quello

Copy: Tom Murphy
Roone Arledge

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER
JAMES H. QUELLO

April 11, 1994

Larry Taishoff
Broadcasting & Cable Magazine
1705 DeSales St., NW
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Larry,

It was great seeing your smiling face in the audience of Radio and Television News Directors Award. I also enjoyed our visit. You are a longtime cherished friend.

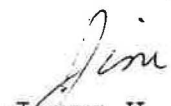
Broadcasting & Cable magazine continues to be exceptionally well edited and I applaud the expansion into cable. In time the magazine may become the "Bible" of the cable industry too. ✓

Even in its excellence, there was only one incomparable Sol Taishoff. He was a wise adviser and great friend to me and I'll attend anything that honors his name.

The award was a signal honor for me. I believe Sol would have approved too.

Best wishes for continued health, happiness and achievement.

Cordially,


James H. Quello

P.S. Sol and I had lunch at least once a month. Whenever convenient, I'd enjoy lunch with you -- I'll even buy.