

Remarks by  
Commissioner James H. Quello  
Before AWRT's 41st National Convention  
La Posada Resort Hotel  
Paradise Valley, AZ  
May 29, 1992

NEW TECHNOLOGIES (DBS, DAB, HDTV) AND  
COMPETITION FOR SPECTRUM USE

Thank you. In addition to the gracious comments, I'd like to add: Jim Quello, AWRT full member, former AWRT awardee and AWRT enthusiast.

It may not be a claim to fame but I'm also, and by far, the most senior commissioner ever to be reappointed to a commission and the most senior to ever serve as FCC Commissioner. Sometimes in the past I have been described as being too young for my age -- it only became an asset in my very golden years. I'm delighted to be a fugitive from the longevity law of averages and to be around to participate in the exciting new communications developments.

Today, we are discussing subjects that merit the Commission's highest priority in the next ten years. Our highest priority will be the orderly, practical implementation of the advanced technological services of fiber optics, telecomputing, DBS, HDTV, DAB, cellular and personal communications services. Advanced technology often outstrips society's ability to integrate it into our already complex, sometimes expensive communications systems. The rate and extent of technological development will be influenced by consumer acceptance and affordability, along with spectrum compression techniques, commercial practicalities, legislative and regulatory actions and by the service's beneficial contribution to overall public interest.

Because of the vital importance of an informed electorate in a democracy and the pervasive power of TV, I believe the preservation and enhancement of free universal broadcast service whether over-the-air or otherwise must continue to be the mainspring of American mass communications in the 21st century.

Anyway, I'm pleased to act as moderator today for discussion of the vital fascinating developments affecting the future of all broadcasters -- the oncoming technologies of DAB, HDTV, DBS, telco fiber optics and if we have time, PCS (personal communications services). We are particularly fortunate to have such an impressive panel of experts to update and enlighten us on the upcoming capabilities of new technology with the promise of greatly improved video and audio quality and expanded services.

Each panelist has been allotted approximately 5-10 minutes for individual presentations on subjects of their choosing. After all the panelists have completed their presentation, we will be open for questions and accusations.

The first panelist with a general overview of communications advanced technology is Marcia L. DeSonne, Director of Technology Assessment, National Association of Broadcasters. Her responsibilities include examining advanced technologies, market developments and related domestic/international issues likely to significantly impact the broadcast communications industry in the United States. Ms. DeSonne's credits and publications demonstrate all the expert attributes of her rocket scientist capabilities. Her major publications have focused on Digital Audio Broadcasting, HDTV, television satellite newsgathering, DBS and telco fiber optics. I'm delighted to present Marcia DeSonne -- and Marcia, I'll ask you the same thing I always ask my trusty engineering assistant -- "please present the intricacies of advanced technology in 'stupidese' so that I can understand and vote responsibly" -- Marcia.

The next lady, Margita Eklund White, who is not only a respected, but a practically revered former FCC colleague. She is a universally well liked and knowledgeable former commissioner who has made good -- Bigtime! She is doing a most effective job as president of the Association for Maximum Service Television (MSTV) and serves on five different corporate boards. MSTV along with NAB is in the forefront of HDTV development and no one is better informed on HDTV current and future capabilities than our next panel speaker -- Margita.

We are fortunate in having for our next speaker, a distinguished broadcast executive who can bring us the "real world" capabilities of DAB. Alan Box is president of EZ Communications, Inc. owners of 14 radio stations, 10 FM and 4 AM. He is a board member of the National Association of Broadcasters as well as the Chairman of NAB's Digital Radio Task Force. He also serves as a board member of the George Mason Bank and the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce. I have repeated in the past that the FCC must do everything possible to expedite initiation of DAB because it will provide greatly improved sound and interference-free reception, particularly for AM. Here's Alan to tell us all about DAB.

And now for the questions and accusations -- I'll lead with a question -- Margita, how does MSTV plan to allocate or recommend allocations of HDTV spectrum among broadcasters? Can the relative reach of current TV broadcasters be maintained?

Alan, I'd like your detailed opinion on key DAB problems. How can the AM service be accommodated by digital technology? Also, is there a conflict among AM and FM broadcasters in the development of DAB?

Marcia DeSonne: There seems to be some troublesome intramural conflict at the NAB in recommending implementation of HDTV-allocation of broadcast spectrum among VHF and UHF; in DAB -the FM haves versus the AM have-nots; in DBS - satellite national service versus terrestrial local service; telco entry into cable with the possibility that telco, a much larger regulated monopoly, may be more dominant in the marketplace than cable, a smaller unregulated monopoly. Should broadcasters or NAB support telco entry with safeguards and assured TV stations carriage? We would also like your opinion on how these conflicting advanced technology interests may be resolved with the help of NAB.

Questions from the audience, etc.