

REMARKS OF
COMMISSIONER JAMES H. QUELLO
before
OREGON ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS
LINCOLN CITY, OREG.
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Tonight I'm breaking my pledge. I pledged that I would not accept any speaking assignments until at least 60 days in office. However, I couldn't pick a better place to break that pledge than (1) a state broadcasting association, and (2) particularly the Oregon State Broadcasting Association. Here's why: new speakers normally have to search for a mutuality of interest in audiences so that they can better identify with and appreciate each other. I thought it over and realized I had a built-in mutuality of interests going for me here tonight ----

First, my wife, Mary Butler Quello, was born in Portland and reared in Corvallis. Her father was M. H. "Dad" Butler, Oregon track coach member of three different "Hall of Fames" who caused quite a stir in the 1920's when his team started to beat Stanford, Southern Cal. and Oregon and swept the Penn, Duke and Kansas relays. The name of his dear friend, "Spec Keane," for years Oregon State Athletic Director, was a household name in our home for years. Also, Mary always insisted the rain is dry in Oregon. The only reason she did not accompany me is because she thought staying only 24 hours in such a wonderful place is sacrilegious. Believe me, I was under extreme duress to stay an entire week so she could share with me the most beautiful state in the union - and I would have liked it immensely - However, a one week vacation after only one week on the job offended my management sensitivities.

So, here I am - and neither my amateur standing nor your treasury will be impaired by my very first speaking assignment as a Commissioner. You see you have as your speaker tonight someone who has the dubious distinction of surviving the longest confirmation hearing on record.

Understandably, more people are interested in hearing how a broadcaster (anyway, the so-called controversial broadcaster) became a Commissioner than in a more official treatise on the mutual problems confronting broadcasters and the FCC.

My FCC ordeal all started with the Michigan Association of Broadcasters. I have a full understanding of what you are all up to in conventions. I was a convention chairman for three consecutive years, legislative chairman for 12 years, board member for 3 different terms or 6 years, past president---also served on Commissions appointed by four different Mayors and four different Governors.

The MAB passed a resolution and sent it to the entire Michigan Congressional delegation. I was touched --- "If nothing else happens -- I'll treasure it and show it to my grandchildren". Carl Lee saw me choking up with emotion and said, "Quello, let's keep it in perspective. You are a real SOB, but we can identify with you!"

Nevertheless, the response was amazing -- both Senators and all Congressmen except one wrote encouraging responses of support -- bi-partisan support.

I went to Washington and consulted with Senators Hart, Griffin and Congressmen Ford, Dingell, Nedzi, Martha Griffiths, Cederburg and others.

Dingell asked "Why do you want the damned job? -- you will be beat-up by Senators and Congressmen and overruled by the Courts."

So, the stage was set. It was all very easy - the Republicans nominate you and the Democrats confirm you. I never did understand what all the shouting "in-between" was about. When the publicity broke - and the volume was unbelievable, someone said "Hey, you are getting famous!" I said "Hell no, I'm getting notorious - there is quite a difference!"

After all the tough opposition started, someone said - you are an Italian who needs two Godfathers - thank goodness I had them in Senators Phil Hart and Bob Griffin - also 4 democratic congressmen who testified for me.

As you know, I received crucial and substantial bi-partisan support.

My broadcast political policy was an open door to all major parties and candidates with the goal of objectivity, fairness in news treatment, editorial commentary and commercial and program clearance - the same as yours.

Personally, I supported candidates that I believed were honest, diligent and most capable of serving the people's interest. Neither party claims a monopoly on these qualities. Although we don't register by parties in Michigan, I voted Democratic the past 16 years in my own district. I have great respect for my own Congressman, Lu Nedzi--before him, I supported his democratic predecessor, Harold Ryan.

As you know, it was an open hearing -- fortunate in that opponents overstated their case. But, I was particularly fortunate in the fair, objective conduct of the hearing by Chairman John Pastore who initially expressed grave concern about my nomination.

My friends in Detroit kept asking, "How is it going?" I replied "Better than the publicity." And invariably they would say, "God, we hope so!"

However, the full hearing was beneficial in that I became aware of the concern and aspirations of those opposing me - some with good reasoning and some with distortion of facts that fortunately were discounted by members of the Senate Committee.

Incidentally, my thinking has drastically changed regarding compensation of government officials - especially of Senators and Congressmen. After a close association with many of them over a period of a year, I firmly believe they are overworked and underpaid. They work long hours, under constant pressure from all directions; the decisions often are awesome and have momentous impact on American life. We are fortunate that Congress attracts ambitious, energetic and dedicated men.

Anyway, here I am. I find the pace exciting, the work challenging and the workload exhausting. Here, too, the decisions at times seem awesome. I thought FCC meant Federal Communications Commission - now I realize it stands for from crisis to crisis.

At this early stage, I don't want to assume the role of an expert. I'm still in an orientation period. Also, remember that some questions on matters pending before the Commission are like asking a newly-appointed judge how he is going to judge an upcoming case. I did answer 18 questions at the hearing posed by a public interest law firm -- these would be similar to many questions broadcasters have or would ask. I'll be glad to review a few, if you like.

I have answered a few other questions from reporters on matters of personal opinion, rather than FCC rules. It is true "I'd fight like hell to keep the Exorcist off TV." It is also true that I would not try to curb news commentary on the President's or Vice-President's speeches. I believe in freedom of speech -- I believe newsmen have the right to be wrong and that news executives have the responsibility of seeing that they're not wrong too often. I believe newsmen have the right and obligation to seek the truth - the facts - but I don't condone arrogance, or rudeness, on their part. I also believe that freedom of speech applies to government officials -- they have the right to criticize the press without raising the ominous spectre of censorship.

I believe the major impact of TV and radio on the American way of life is in news and news analysis, not in entertainment programs - as enjoyable as they may be. Recent research indicates that more Americans are getting news from TV and radio than newspapers. This news influence poses an enormous responsibility. It seems that owners and managers should more and more assume roles of publishers and editors rather than sales executives, show business producers, or financial experts. These are all vital and important functions - but it is my personal belief that there should be more top-level emphasis on news. Also, I believe stations and networks should have larger news staffs capable of more direct "on-the-spot" and more investigative reporting to complement the comprehensive job done by the wire services.

Yes, I believe TV violence must be curbed and commercials on children's programs carefully screened and judiciously reduced. However, I realize the no-censorship provisions of the Communications Act (Section 326) raises problems for anyone urging government action in the area of programming. We can't have censorship, but broadcasters, and particularly network executives and producers, should exercise the good judgment that will obviate any public demand for government intervention in programming.

The upcoming problems of cross-ownership, CATV regulation, and the fairness doctrine are complicated issues that require study and careful evaluation of all facts.

All I can say is that I'll carefully weigh all facts, agonize over the sensitive decisions and then call them as I see them. On some upcoming issues, you are bound to offend 50% of interested parties either way you decide.

I pledge to objectively evaluate all evidence and to strive for recommendations or decisions that best serve total public interest. I am grateful to the government leaders who were a source of encouragement and support during the hectic past year.

I pledge to them - and to you - that I will discharge my responsibilities so as to merit your continued trust and confidence.