

June 23, 1982

Concurring Statement of  
FCC Commissioner James H. Quello

In re: Report and Order on Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS)  
Service, General Docket No. 80-603

While this Report and Order has been characterized as an "interim" action, it clearly authorizes a new service which has the potential to dramatically change the current pattern of video distribution in this country. Given the huge capital resources required to participate in this "interim" venture, it is unlikely that the Commission will embark upon a different course once the resources have been committed and the service has begun.

I am particularly concerned that local broadcasting services be given full consideration in any equation which examines this new DBS service. Localism has, traditionally and as a matter of Commission policy, been the bedrock of the broadcasting service in this country. I continue to think it is a good policy and one which demands the careful attention of all of us charged with the responsibility of maintaining and improving the system. It has been noted that the bulk of television programming is not locally produced. However, lest the inference be drawn that local programming and non-local programming are separate entities and need not be considered together, I would point out that the revenues generated by local stations from non-local entertainment programming often supports the production of quality local programming. Thus, to the extent that DBS supplants local broadcasting as a distributor of non-local, entertainment programming, economic support for local program production might well be diminished. My concern is not in protecting the profits of local broadcasters but in protecting continued and enhanced local broadcasting service.

I realize that predicting the effects of any new technology upon an existing service is historically fraught with peril. Radio broadcasting was once believed by many to be doomed because of the advent of television broadcasting. Of course, radio broadcasting has not only survived but it continues to prosper. Radio programming was changed as a result of the introduction of television service. I would expect that, over time, the programming of local television stations will also change as a result of the new video distribution technologies including direct satellite-to-home broadcasting. Local television broadcasters are likely to be faced with problems of adaptation similar to those faced by radio broadcasters thirty years ago. I am confident that they will meet that challenge.

Despite some very real concerns about the orderly introduction of this new technology, I realize that it has the potential to offer to the American public important and desirable new services in the very near future. This Report and Order deliberately imposes minimal rules and regulations upon this new service providing an opportunity for it to develop in a manner likely to best serve the

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public. Clearly, DBS is an idea whose time has come and it ill behooves regulators to stand in its way. Thus, I support today's Commission action to move forward.

My support, however, is tempered by my concern that localism must not be sacrificed. I do not fully share the confidence expressed in the Report and Order that localism has nothing to fear from DBS. At the same time, neither do I believe that the death knell of local broadcasting is being sounded by this action.

Therefore, I concur in the result.