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OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER
JAMES H. QUELLO

November 27, 1985

Donald V. West, Editor
Broadcasting Magazine
1735 DeSales Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Don:

Your November 25th issue editorial, "Fee and Fie," was right on target in most respects. However, your editorial extrapolated beyond the intent and scope of my Hofstra University speech. Please be assured that I am not proposing any new spectrum fee to support public broadcasting. While my enthusiasm for public broadcasting is well known, your editorial's implication that I would support asking commercial broadcasters to underwrite the valuable services we all receive from public broadcasting is simply incorrect.


It should be noted that the spectrum fee mentioned in my Hofstra speech was the exact quote from my testimony before the House Communications Subcommittee, presented in September 1978. In addition, my speech noted (as does your editorial) that the spectrum has no value until someone uses it to transmit a signal. My remarks were not intended to rally support for any massive new fees. In terms of the amount of fee that I would regard as "practical," I endorse only the amount that has been proposed in Congress as an appropriate cost of regulation fee.

Unfortunately, it is a fact that the substantial merits of complete deregulation of the broadcast industry are not sufficient on their own to return broadcast deregulation to Congress' agenda. I stand by the view that a practical fee is a small price to pay for security from the uncertainties of government regulation, and I hope there will be additional discussion concerning how to achieve the type of further deregulation that the broadcast industry needs, but that only Congress can provide. I share your hope that the payment of reasonable fees to obtain communications licenses may "turn out to be down payments on a less unstable future" for broadcasters.

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I applaud your use of the editorial privilege to make your point about unreasonable expectations from broadcaster fees and fully support your view. I hope this letter clarifies my position.

Best wishes.


James H. Quello