

Remarks by Commissioner James H. Quello
Before the
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Heartfelt thanks for this most prestigious and memorable of what I humorously call my pre-posthumous awards. As a fugitive from the actuarial law of averages, I especially appreciate receiving this distinctive honor while I'm here to enjoy it and enjoy your company.

This type of recognition is especially gratifying because I have been around long enough to have voted against all of you 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. 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. They consider public service requirements as a natural opportunity for civic integration rather than a regulatory burden and thus remain worthy of Congressional and FCC support for universal free broadcast service.

It is true that broadcasting 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 socially responsible, worthy trustees who are doing an excellent job for their communities. A very small percentage through human error, carelessness and in few extreme cases, disdain, 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 available to all the public. Broadcasting is the most influential and most essential 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 and that vital service should be free to all the public to prevent our becoming a nation of information haves and have nots.

There are so many subjects for discussion that I must defer to some more propitious time. I'm reminded of a 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 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 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 the FCC and my personal staff during my period of interim chairmanship. This award today is a symbol of their dedication and achievements during the most hectic period in my 19-1/2 years at the FCC!

Remember that industry and government must work together in a constructive spirit of mutual cooperation to maximize progress. In this spirit of cooperation we assure that Americans continue to be the best informed, the most gainfully employed and best served people in the world.

And my hat's off to you the American broadcasters. Through your years of pioneering initiatives and private enterprise accomplishments you have given the American public the most comprehensive, most informative and by far the best overall TV and radio broadcasting service in the world.

God Bless You All!

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