

# TV Needs to Clean Up, Grow Up

**T**ELEVISION has been called the world's greatest invention for mass education. James Michener, the author, has said that in the future about 70 per cent of Americans will be educated primarily by television and 30 per cent in traditional ways.

Researchers who have had time to count report that by the time a child graduates from high school, he or she will have spent some 12,000 hours in a classroom and 15,000 hours in front of a television set.

Associations for improved broadcasting have estimated that by his 18th birthday, a youngster will have been exposed to 350,000 commercials, 18,000 murders and various assaults, arsons, robberies and rapes.

He or she will have spent more time watching TV than will be required to earn a college degree.

The question arises as to whether what is learned via TV is desirable. Is it useful in building character or

citizenship? Will it develop work habits that will enable a person to earn a living or to make a contribution to society?

Recently, in Ohio, a 14-year-old boy got his father's pistol and killed his 11-year-old brother by reenacting a scene they had watched the night before on television.

A 15-year old boy in Florida lost his plea of "television induced insanity" as a defense for killing an elderly woman who caught him ransacking her home.

These examples do not reflect widespread conditions, but who knows to what extent attitudes of wrongdoing, immorality and permissiveness may be instilled in young people by TV? Or in adults?

Responsibility for what youngsters watch rests with parents, who might not realize that their own perceptiveness is being altered by repetitive presentations of things that they formerly objected to.

The growing practice of presenting profanity, sex scenes, violence, nudity and traditionally immoral situations on TV has been called "bringing the stag party into the home".

It may be assumed that networks are trying to program what they believe most people are willing to watch. However, there is little evidence available to indicate that network officials are trying to find out what people would prefer to watch if it were available. The public's choices are limited.

In order to live up to its potential value as a useful means of education and a respectable means of communication, television has some cleaning up and growing up to do.

This won't come about as long as people watch whatever is offered, without protesting undesirable programs. They may be like the "TV Doll" offered by a saleslady, who explained: "You just wind it up and all it does is watch TV!"