

Public Can Influence TV Programming

THE PUBLIC is largely responsible for what is broadcast on television and radio, whether it is good, bad or indifferent.

The recent campaign by a group called the Coalition for Better Television proved that advertisers will change programming if listeners demand it. One major advertiser withdrew support from more than 50 network programs "for reasons of taste" in response to demand.

If further substantial improvement in programming is to result, it will occur in response to public demand — or objections.

The Federal Communications Commission, Congress and the courts will do little, if anything, to eliminate or reduce sex, violence, profanity or other elements many regard as immoral or indecent. They lean upon our constitutional freedom of speech and the press to grant this pervasive medium the privilege of purveying filth to every home.

Network managements will and do broadcast anything that may win them higher ratings on the some-

what questionable surveys that are supposed to measure audiences and listener preferences. Higher ratings mean more dollars.

Advertisers and sponsors are not as much concerned with the programs that interrupt their sales pitches as they are with the volume of merchandise sold. The cash register is their rating.

If TV spots will sell anything from cosmetics to automobiles they also can be used to sell ideas. Liberals and social reformers seem to have grasped this concept earlier than patriotic and religious groups. They also found that program content could be used and they have placed their people in key positions to do so.

Five years ago a Washington columnist, Patrick J. Buchanan, studied public television, which might presumably be less biased than commercial networks. He found that only one out of 20 TV shows "was hosted by or featured a conspicuous conservative."

You don't need a survey to realize that anything on TV from news anal-

ysis to situation comedies may be used to promote moral permissiveness, drinking, gambling and sexual prosmicuity, or that these programs might be used to promote the opposite viewpoints.

Churches have been slow to get on the TV bandwagon. Quite a few arranged early to broadcast their Sunday worship services. These usually are not "staged" for TV and rarely come across as strongly as a snappy beer commercial during time-out at a ball game.

Independent evangelists began to capitalize on TV by setting up special broadcasts, utilizing professional services. When the public responded to "the electronic church" by sending money, the TV preachers became targets of criticism from both, competitive liberal elements and jealous church leaders who missed similar opportunities.

Religious denominations are now taking new looks at TV and considering how to play catch-up on the air waves with the opposition covering the bases and controlling the ball.