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Statement of Mike Mansfield - TV Situation in Montana

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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Mr. Chairman:

At this time I want to take this opportunity to introduce to your Committee representatives of the television industry, who are here from Montana:

Mr. Edward Craney of Butte
Mr. Barclay Craighead of Helena
Mr. Arthur Mosby of Missoula
Mr. Lewis Moore of Glendive
Mr. Frank Reardon of Kalispell

who represent the live TV stations.

We also have present:

Archer Taylor, Kalispell
Stratford Smith, Attorney, Washington, D. C.,

who, I understand, is representing

none of Irvington, Charlotte Bader of

Hauser, and other cable TV operators of

Montana.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to urgently request that each of these gentlemen be given ample time to present their statements so that out of this hearing, and out of the hearing which has been scheduled by the FCC, will come a solution to the TV problem in my State of Montana.
There does not appear to be any great degree of stability in the industry in my State, nor assurances that all our people will continue to be served.

For example, so that your Committee will have some idea as to the uncertainty in the State, about 4 years ago the rest of the Delegation and I received many protests relative to TV Boosters being declared illegal by the FCC -- it meant that many of our isolated areas would be out of TV service if boosters were not allowed. As you know, this matter went into the courts and is still under consideration by the FCC Commission.

Then early this year, I began receiving thousands of letters protesting "Paid TV" -- at which time I assumed my constituents were protesting what people in the East know as the "Zenith" proposal. Only when I returned to Montana during the Easter recess did I realize that the people were not writing about this but another form of "pay TV". While in Montana, I was contacted by Messrs. Craighead and Craney and other owners of TV stations, at which time I met with them, at their request, to discuss their problem. I was told that they had recently attended a tri-state meeting of TV station operators in Pocatello, Idaho, at which time the problem of microwave-fed cable systems, as they affect the TV stations, was brought up. On that occasion, they requested that I contact the officials of the FCC and the Chairmen of the respective Senate and House Committees to look into their difficulties.

Upon my return to Washington, I wrote the Chairman of this Committee requesting that your Committee look into this matter, and as
you know, I also contacted Chairman Harris of the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee as well as the FCC members, making the same request. I then released this information to the press so that all the people of Montana would know what I had done.

On April 19, I learned that Rosal Hyde, a member of the FCC, had gone to Idaho to attend the funeral of his father. In spite of the occasion, I took the liberty of calling him. I asked Mr. Hyde if it would be possible for him to arrange a meeting with representatives of the live TV stations so that they could discuss their problem in view of their request to me, and Mr. Hyde very kindly set up such a meeting on April 22 at Pocatello, Idaho. This information was also released to the press.

The purpose of my letters, Mr. Chairman, was to request that all the facts be brought out so that, if possible, this very complicated matter could be straightened out once and for all so that the people in my state would know what they could expect to have in the way of assurances of maximum coverage and TV stability. I am sure you can understand that until it is resolved, the people of Montana will not know whether their existing TV service will continue or what additional TV they can reasonably expect to have in the future.

Since television came into Montana, in Butte we had one TV station close; in Kalispell, another TV station closed. It is my understanding that in Bozeman, a cable system was discontinued. I do not have all the facts as to why each of these facilities ceased to operate nor do I know the ultimate solution to this problem. I do consider it
vital to the people of my state that the maximum efforts be made by this Committee and the FCC to find one.

Up to this time, I have received over 20,000 letters and signatories to petitions on both sides of this question. Many of these have written against legislation regulating cable system. If any such legislation is pending I am unaware of it as the only legislation introduced that I know of is S. Res. 271 by me, having to do with Zenith Paid TV proposal.

At this time, I would like to request that copies of my letters to those who have written me be made a part of the record. These communications have gone out to all the people who have contacted me on this matter.

It is my hope that we can have all kinds of TV on a fair and equitable basis in Montana.

And, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you and the members of your Committee for giving these folks from Montana the opportunity to present their views. Thank you.
April 15, 1958

Honorable Oren Harris, Chairman
Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am enclosing a letter which I have today directed to the Chairman and the members of the Federal Communications Commission relative to the TV situation as it exists at the present time in the State of Montana. I have received well in excess of 10,000 letters, telegrams, telephone calls, and signatories to petitions on this matter. The people who have written to me are desirous of retaining free TV on a local basis. At the present time one TV station at Kalispell has closed down, and according to what information I can gather, if this situation is not corrected, similar action may be expected in Helena and perhaps other TV stations in the State as well.

I would therefore request, on the basis of the enclosed letter to the FCC and in view of the facts stated therein, that the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee undertake an investigation at its earliest convenience to the end that this situation can be cleared, the picture in Montana stabilized, and a degree of assurance given to both the owners of the TV stations in the State that they will be in a position to continue to operate, and the viewers that they will be in a position to expect continued coverage in the TV field.

With best personal wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Mike Mansfield
April 15, 1958

Honorable Warren G. Magnuson, Chairman
Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am enclosing a letter which I have today directed to the Chairman and the members of the Federal Communications Commission relative to the TV situation as it exists at the present time in the State of Montana. I have received well in excess of 10,000 letters, telegrams, telephone calls, and signatures to petitions on this matter. The people who have written to me are desirous of retaining free TV on a kieak basis. At the present time one TV station at Kalispell has closed down, and according to what information I can gather, if this situation is not corrected, similar action may be expected in Helena and perhaps other TV stations in the State as well.

I would therefore request, on the basis of the enclosed letter to the FCC and in view of the facts stated therein, that the Senate Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee undertake an investigation at its earliest convenience to the end that this situation can be cleared, the picture in Montana stabilized, and a degree of assurance given to both the owners of the TV stations in the State that they will be in a position to continue to operate, and the viewers that they will be in a position to expect continued coverage in the TV field.

With best personal wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Mike Mansfield
85TH CONGRESS  
S. RES. 271

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 4, 1958

Mr. Mansfield submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce

RESOLUTION

1   Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that the
2   Federal Communications Commission should not, without
3   specific authorization by law, authorize or permit any tele-
4   vision broadcasting station to impose a toll, fee, subscription,
5   or other charge, directly or indirectly, on the general public
6   for the privilege of viewing television programs received
7   over television sets located in the home.
FOR YOUR INFORMATION

I am sending you below a copy of the communication I have sent to the Chairman and all the Members of the Federal Communications Commission, as well as to the Chairmen of the Senate and House Interstate Commerce Committees, requesting that an investigation be made of the television situation in Montana. Please be assured of my continued interest. Regards

MIKE MANSFIELD

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April 16, 1958

Honorable John C. Doerfer
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On my trip to Montana in early April, I discussed the T.V. situation in the State with various station owners and other interested people. It appears to me that fundamental questions are involved. They are: Will the majority of the people continue to be given free TV from local stations, locally owned, locally sponsored in the areas which have been allocated by the FCC, or will programs originating in the States of Washington and Utah, delivered independently of Montana stations, be allowed to come in, take over a portion of the TV market on a paid basis, and thereby undermine the Montana Stations, force them off the air as in the case of Kalispell -- and maybe eventually Missoula and Helena and perhaps others? Where does this place Montana advertisers who keep Montana stations going and make it possible for free TV in the State? Where will the continued concentration of outside stations into Montana leave Montana with its industries, its advertising, its recreation, its payroll of Montana people gainfully employed? Where does it leave the great majority of our people who have purchased TV sets but who cannot afford pay TV either because of economic distress or because of living in an isolated area remote from out-of-State connections. I should like to point out that Montana has an estimated 125,000 TV sets. Of this total some 15,000 -- 20,000 are on a connected and paid TV basis with stations originating outside the State of Montana, which contribute nothing in the way of employment for Montana people, nothing in the way of taxes to our counties and State, nothing in the way of Montana advertising, and nothing in the way of Montana groups entertaining or performing for Montana people. In other words, the trend would be away from Montana to other States for people who could afford to pay for it and for those who could not afford to pay, their investments in their TV sets would be lost and their right to this form of free entertainment and education taken away from them. This is indeed a matter for investigation by the FCC and the Senate and House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committees. The questions and assumptions I have raised are entitled to answers. I therefore most urgently request that you investigate the situation I have described in the interests of saving free TV for Montana, furnishing jobs for our people, outlets for our advertisers, continuity of stations, and taxes for our counties and our state. I urge that you do this now before more of our TV stations close down so that, in the interests of Montana, the chaotic situation which is now developing can be brought to a halt and stability given to this industry. After all, the Montana stations are operating within the spheres laid down by the FCC, under FCC regulations, and supposedly with some degree of protection to them for the channels the FCC allocated to them.

With best personal wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

/s/ MIKE MANSFIELD

COPY

Mike Mansfield Papers, Series 21, Box 39, Folder 62, Mansfield Library, University of Montana
This will acknowledge receipt of your communication which I was delighted to receive.

I am enclosing a copy of Senate Resolution 271 which I introduced on March 4th, as a result of the thousands of communications I received protesting "Paid TV."

At that time, I had assumed the individuals writing to me were protesting paid TV such as the "Zenith Proposal," and Senate Resolution 271 relates only to that problem. When I went to Montana during the Easter recess, it was called to my attention by the licensed TV station operators that this was not the problem which was affecting the areas of Butte, Helena, Kalispell, and perhaps others. As a result of the information called to my attention at that time, I wrote to the Chairman of the FCC and all the members of the Commission and also to the Chairmen of the Senate and House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committees. I am enclosing a copy of that communication so that you will see what the arguments were as presented by me at that time. A copy of this letter has been sent to everyone who wrote me on this question. Since the release of that letter to the press, I have received communications from other areas in Montana regarding cable systems, community antennas, "boosters," and "translators."

It is my belief that an investigation of this problem is necessary to the end that all aspects of this complicated situation may be thoroughly explored and a solution reached which will bring stability to the industry and the best possible TV service to the public.

It is my hope that the FCC will take an active interest in the Montana situation, so that a square deal can be accorded to all, and in the hope also that there will, in the future, be no other Montana TV stations going off the air. My desire is to see that people who have purchased TV sets will be able to derive enjoyment, education and other benefits from them, and I would assume that there will be room for all types of TV entertainment to the people of Montana.
You may also be certain that the views expressed by you will be brought to the attention of the Committees of Interstate and Foreign Commerce of the House and Senate so that a broader picture of the TV situation can be drawn, so that all sides will be heard, and so that the best possible solution will be reached.

You may be assured also that your views will be brought to the attention of the Federal Communications Commission because it is my feeling that all parties involved in this matter should be given every consideration, and that the case should be decided on the basis of justice and equality.

I want to thank you for your communication and to assure you that I appreciate your courtesy in giving me the views expressed therein.

With best personal wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Encls:

Mike Mansfield

Mike Mansfield Papers, Series 21, Box 39, Folder 62, Mansfield Library, University of Montana