



## Implementing the Carnegie Plan

THE LANGUAGE of Senate Bill 1160, which would set up a Public Television corporation for non-commercial broadcasting, states specifically that the corporation "may not own or operate any . . . network. . . ." The inspiration for this prohibition presumably came directly from *The Report and Recommendations of The Carnegie Commission on Educational Television*. That report disapproved of "networking," as used by commercial broadcasters: "It [network TV] seeks to serve a single audience where Public Television seeks to serve differentiated audiences."

S 1160 also authorizes the proposed public TV corporation "to arrange, by grant or contract with appropriate public or nonprofit private agencies, organizations, or institutions, for interconnection facilities. . . ." James R. Killian, Jr., chairman of the Carnegie Commission, testifying before the Senate Commerce Committee, suggested that the bill be amended by deleting the words "by grant or contract with appropriate public or nonprofit private agencies, organizations, or institutions." The intent of the amendment is to give the corporation authority to deal directly with common carriers (American Telephone & Telegraph, and COMSAT), rather than with intermediate program suppliers, in arranging for "distribution" of programs rather than "networking" in the familiar sense. "Distribution" means rapid and efficient delivery of a program to users "who can either play it immediately or record it for later use." The Carnegie position, obviously, is not that it wants to "network" itself; it wants to prevent any group of program suppliers from combining to network, which would constitute a departure from the basic decentralized, maximum-choice, diversity philosophy of Carnegie.

The major program suppliers in this field now are National Educational Television (NET) and the television stations that hold membership in the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (NAEB). They don't want the proposed corporation to run a network, either, but they are opposed to the suggestion that the corporation be authorized exclusively to deal with the common carriers. For one thing, they argue, the corporation which will hand out the funds for program production should not also have control over the

composition of the traffic. That would be placing too much power over the stations and regional or national suppliers of programs like NET.

The educational program suppliers also think that the Carnegie position on networking is naïve. Sooner or later, the suppliers argue, the officers of the corporation would find themselves inevitably backing into actual network operation. The Carnegie people do favor "rare" instances of live networking for significant events. Such instances would bring about day-to-day decisions, and whether the corporation wanted it or not, the decision-makers at the operational level would be compelled to make network decisions. The local stations, the suppliers also maintain, would soon mandate across-the-nation, interconnected scheduling of outstanding programs, because such broadcasting—to use the trade jargon—has "impact."

The Carnegie Commission may believe strongly that conventional networking is an evil, but talk to most educational station operators and they will tell you that they want to compete with the commercial networks, and the only way they can compete is by "live, impact networking." They don't want to plug in to a network all the time, but they want the option of plugging in to an open, "hot" collectivity.

To this end, NET and NAEB are urging their friends on the Carnegie Commission to create a "buffer body," composed of program-supplier representatives who would take on the day-to-day decision-making involved in a live network. They suggest regularly

scheduled blocks of time distributed among the suppliers. The virtue of such an arrangement, they assert, is not only that it assures a more independent operation of an inevitable network, but that it also creates a federalist system serving better the Carnegie goal of diversity and insulation from pressure.

A local station might produce a program, with corporation funds, and submit it to the "traffic-flow" body of supplier representatives. If this body rejected the program for some reason, the station could then have an appeal to the corporation. If there were no intermediary body, the station would have no appeal. The Carnegie people argue that they would reject programs only in exceptional cases—where the programs violated obvious standards of decency, for example. They would, nevertheless, have the authority to do so—and the question remains, in deciding on any standards—of decency or political controversy—where would the line be drawn? There was a reported difference of opinion in the deliberations of the Carnegie Commission on this point: Some held the line should be drawn, some did not.

As this is written, the educational broadcasters are seeking a united front, and they are discussing a reconciliation of their divergent views. It is not a matter to be disposed of lightly, even to get the bill passed and the details ironed out later. The pressures on local educational broadcasters for collective imagery is great. Networking is perhaps inevitable, and local educational station managers have different motivations than do their commercial counterparts. In the American tradition, the dilemma of fragmentation vs. overcentralization is settled by a system of separation of powers and judicial review. The debate should be pursued, but it would seem to this viewer that NET and NAEB are closer to checks and balances than is Carnegie. —ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.



"Truth is, I'm nuts about her."



## For the Arkansas Traveler

ARKADELPHIA, ARK.

**E**N ROUTE to the dedication of Ouachita Baptist University's handsome new Verser Theatre here, this writer had the opportunity to observe several interesting productions. One was in Little Rock, where a staging by the Arkansas Arts Center of Peter Weiss's *The Persecution and Assassination of Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade* is both superbly disciplined and original.

Under the direction of Dugald MacArthur, the Arkansas Arts Center Players are less macabre and more lyrical than was either the Royal Shakespeare Company or the National Players Company. As a result the text of the play emerges more clearly, and Richard Peaslee's songs, which originally had seemed background music, here become almost musical comedy numbers. While this makes for a merrier evening than the playwright may have intended, it also makes the audience receptive to material it might otherwise reject. Robert Barnes's settings, constructed out of iron pipe, are poetic and unoppressive, and a wonderful invention is the tossing in the air of decapitated dolls' heads to suggest the riotous mood of the French Revolution.

Danny Davis as de Sade, Mickey Cottrell as Marat, and Ginger Valone as Charlotte Corday all give capable performances, and both they and the large supporting cast achieve a clarity of speech and singing not found in many professional companies. If this production is typical, the Arkansas Arts Center, with its fine recently built facilities for instruction and performance, would seem to be making a splendid contribution to the entire state, which it services by means of local chapters.

In Columbia, Missouri, Stephens College unfurled a new play by Jack LaZebnik called *Kate Chase*. Against the background of offstage historical events from 1860 to 1899 we watch the obsessed daughter of statesman Salmon P. Chase as she ruins the lives of those around her by her eagerness to do absolutely anything to get her father elected President. As one victim comments, "We'll have to chop off your head to make your jaws let go."

There are some other memorable lines, of which perhaps the best is, "We should live backwards; start at death and face what brought us to it." The form of the play, however, leads to a too-repetitive demonstration of what is

quickly obvious and not very subtle. And, although a cast made up of a combination of drama faculty actors and undergraduate actresses brings conviction and vitality to their roles, they make the play only fitfully interesting.

In New Orleans the Players Theatre of Le Petit Théâtre du Vieux Carré, and its producer, Jill Young, are presenting the New Orleans Group production of *Victims of Duty*. Taking Ionesco's play, a triumvirate of directors made up of Franklin Adams, Paul Epstein, and Richard Schechner have fashioned a wildly inventive evening of theatrical embroidery intended to enrich the imagery and to take the audience into a greater degree of participation and involvement than would be possible in a traditional production.

We enter the theater through a lobby filled with wall displays, moving pictures, and tape recordings related to the production. Inside there is a semidarkened room with steps and platforms, but no seats. In various parts of the room there are areas in which action will occur, but none of these is forbidden to audience members, except that on occasion during the production they may be asked temporarily to move in order that the actor may proceed.

Following a preperformance period when the actors improvise conversation as they eat their supper—which they even share with some of the audience—Ionesco's text is permitted to take over. Simultaneous with the performing of the play, however, are motion picture projections against each wall, and an accompaniment of music and sound effects. The most amusing of these

special effects is the showing of a motorcyclist en route to the theater. Just as the film shows him reaching the playhouse, the door opens and the motorcyclist rides into the middle of the room.

Lyla Hay, Gerald Hoke, Arthur Wagner, and Bronislav Radakovich perform well and strenuously amid the taxing conditions posed by this sort of experimentation. And there is no gainsaying the uniqueness of the event. Yet it does make the play much more difficult to follow, as well as compelling the theatergoer to sit on the floor for two hours.

Since this form of environmental "intermedia" theater is in its early stages, one is inclined to forgive its imperfections and distractions. For one can visualize a master playwright using these devices to full and penetrating effect. Until one shows up, the New Orleans Group can continue to improve its techniques and exercise its inventiveness in the interpretation of scripts by others, and audiences agile in mind and body may find even these exploratory trips rewarding.

**B**ACK in New York, the National Repertory Theater production of Noel Coward's *Tonight at 8:30* provides a nostalgic and modestly entertaining evening. The first of the three short plays, *Ways and Means*, is a thin spoof of 1927 frivolity as an extravagant young couple solve their financial problems by letting an unemployed chauffeur steal for them.

The second play, *Still Life*, will be remembered by those who saw the movie *Brief Encounter*, which came from it. The National Repertory Theater production is made memorable mostly by designer Will Steven Armstrong, whose setting of a drab British railway café is made enchanting and atmospheric by the use of a gay row of lamps visible in the background. While much of the 1937 sentimentality is rather badly dated and plagues Denholm Elliott and Priscilla Morrill, who must play the middle-aged lovers, the play still catches the flavor of Britain rather effectively.

The third play, *Fumed Oak*, is moved up to 1947, and it is Noel Coward at his antisentimental best. He begins by drawing a comic portrait of a lower-class household in which the meek breadwinner, nicely played by Geoff Garland, is utterly dominated by his wife, his mother-in-law, and even by his spoiled, simpering daughter. Then Coward turns the suddenly revitalized husband loose on his whole messed-up life, which he faces more tough-mindedly and realistically than most men ever come to do. It is stinging theater under the guise of comedy, and director G. Wood has kept the fun and the seriousness in balance.

—HENRY HEWES.

