

# Some ABCs

## In education

BY RON INOUE

As a parent or teacher, have you considered the arguments in the current debate on children's television viewing habits? Have you seriously discussed the issue with others? Have you read any of the contradictory research on the effects of television on viewers of all ages, but particularly preschoolers?

There are a number of organizations and books which provide interesting reading on the subject. It may be well to consider their points of view even though you may not agree with the conclusions.

There is one group of people who claim that television in all forms is detrimental to its viewers because the excessive violence and fantasy, portrayed on the cops-and-robbers show, soap operas, and the quiz shows, cause the viewer to confuse reality with the drama on the tube. These television opponents also claim that there are physical symptoms exhibited by the compulsive television viewer which are similar to drug withdrawal - passivity, nondevelopment of social skills, and dependency on daily doses of television. Without the latter, these people become emotionally upset.

There is another group who claim that television watching should be carefully selected and supervised. Parents of the viewers should be judicious of the types of programming children watch; and therefore, there should be an active involvement in the viewing. An example of active involvement would be the teacher who prepares students to watch a film in class, has questions to be answered during the viewing, and then discusses with the class what was viewed. Some families use this method when they watch television at home.

Another group of people believe television has no detrimental effect on its viewers. This group believes that the viewer is fully conscious that television is not portraying the real world, and the viewer therefore needs no protection from television. These people also believe that television viewing is highly beneficial because of the diversity of programming, and that television watching is healthy and valid recreation. Regardless of where you stand in this continuum of reactions of television, you may be interested in several publications and organizations which discuss the subject.

Ms. Jennifer Wilke, coordinator of instructional TV within the State Department of Education (Pouch F, Juneau 99811) has written a paper entitled, "Learning to Use Television: the Art of Selection." This paper discusses instructional television and would be of particular interest to teachers and parents. Copies of her paper may be obtained by requesting them directly from Jennifer.

Marie Winn has written a book entitled "The Plug-in Drug: Television, Children, and the Family," published by Bantam in 1978. The book is critical of television, and this title is frequently cited by those opposed to television viewing.

Rose Goldsen, a Cornell sociologist who has lectured at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, has written "The Show and Tell Machine: How Television Works and Works You Over," a 1977 publication of Dial Press. This book emphasizes the commercial nature of television and states that the real goal of TV is to make money selling advertising. To sell air time, the producers create shows which are predominantly based on mass appeal which bypasses other concerns about ethics, fairness, and human values.

"Media Watch" is the newsletter of the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting, a consumer advocacy organization with which Ralph Nader is affiliated. The newsletter provides information about the NCCB and general information regarding the consumers' interests in broadcasting. The address for the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting is 1028 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20036. Request their newsletter and publications list.

The topic of the effects of television on its viewers is a topical and potentially more important issue for parents and educators. The more we can learn about the subject, the better we may be able to educate our children.