

FEB 1970

WETA Axes Show As 'Misleading'

WETA-TV (Channel 26) cancelled a scheduled telecast of an "NET Journal" program called "Who Invited US?" last night and told viewers that the program was "unnecessarily misleading."

The cancelled program was written and produced by Alan M. Levin and it blamed American economic interests as the main cause of U.S. military intervention in other nations.

William J. McCarter, vice president and general manager of WETA-TV, said that station officials had been wrestling with whether to show the film "for several days." The decision not to show it was made late yesterday afternoon. At 9 p.m., a Channel 26 announcer read a statement:

"After thoroughly reviewing the program, WETA had determined that the content is sufficiently distorted by over-simplification and omission of important, relevant information as to render the final product unnecessarily misleading."

The announcement ended with WETA's apology for "any inconvenience to our viewers that may result from this change."

Dr. Jack Hunter, program director, said that only once before had the station canceled a scheduled program. That was a three-and-a-half-hour program from a Boston station on draft dodgers.

Hunter said that the station had called in three "highly qualified" experts to preview "Who Invited US?" and had shown the program to members of the WETA staff. "We decided," Hunter said, "that the facts in the program are essentially correct" but the use of "gross techniques" caused the content to be misleading.

Hunter said he would have approved the program "in another context," particularly if it were clearly identified as "Alan Levin's statement." He added that the film isn't "Public Broadcasting's statement or the 'NET Journal's' statement. It is just one guy's opinion."

In place of "Who Invited US?" went a filmed program on the life and music of Dimitri Shostakovich.

James Day, president of National Educational Television (NET) could not be reached for comment. Jim Kararn, Washington bureau chief of NET, said that "Who Invited US?" ran on the full 160-station non-commercial network, with the exception of stations in Austin, Tex., Richmond and Norfolk, Va. and Washington.

The film was previewed in Washington last Wednesday by an invited audience that included Sen. Frank Church (D-Ida.), retired Marine Corps Commandant David M. Shoup, Congressional staff members and the press.

—Lawrence Laurent

RADIO/TELEVISION

WETA Rapped as 'Censors'

The 54-member Public Television Producers Association (PTPA) yesterday called on the Federal Communications Commission to investigate the cancellation of an educational television program as "a flagrant denial of the public's right to know."

WETA, the local educational television station (Channel 26), was among five stations that refused to telecast the program, "Who Invited US?" The PTPA statement charged that the station "acted as censors."

The strongly-worded statement from the PTPA was released in New York yesterday by Alan W. Levin, the program's producer.

Last night William J. McCarter, vice president and general manager of Channel 26, said that the scheduled telecast was canceled because the program is "deceptive" and "distorted by the enormous amount of material it chose to omit."

This was McCarter's first public statement since the program, scheduled for Monday night, was canceled that afternoon.

McCarter said he is opposed to censorship. He added that the station would be "abrogating" its responsibility if it were to broadcast material which we believed was deceptive, distorted or dishonest.

He accused the canceled program of "aural and visual

manipulation of the material it did include. Thus, by broadcasting the program we would have presented as objective truth what was in fact only one view of an issue."

Nor did McCarter agree that "Who Invited Us?" should have been telecast with the addition of a panel discussion. McCarter said this "might have" rectified the distortion. But our experience is that few viewers stay tuned for such a discussion after an hour-long dramatic documentary."

The documentary is an attack on United States military intervention. It argues that American troops have usually been sent abroad to protect U.S. investments in foodstuffs, metals or oil. It also accused the military and the CIA of playing important roles in American foreign policy.

M - 505,173
S - 913,045
FEB 17 1970

Screening TV

'Who Invited US?' Is Slated

By HARRY HARRIS
Of The Inquirer Staff

Sunday's NBC small-fry special, "Uncle Sam Magoo," depicted America through a myopic cartoon character's rose-colored glasses. The shade turns bilious green in an "NET Journal" documentary, "Who Invited US?" to be telecast on Channel 12 at 9 P. M. Tuesday and 7 P. M. Sunday.

A saturnine survey of past, current and — who knows? — future U.S. military interventions, it indicts foreign policymakers' machinations in various climes at various times, attributing them mainly to dollars-and-cents, rather than heart-and-sense.



HARRY HARRIS

The sympathies and indignations of producer-scripter Alan M. Levin, who won a top award for a "PBL" entry, "Defense and Domestic Needs: Contest for Tomorrow," are never in doubt.

"While much of the world moans in agony and yearns for change," charges narrator Dave Dugan, "our most vigorous commitment is to stability . . . Few would deny the virtues of preparedness, but with pledges from 42 nations, many unstable, what criteria for action do we use?"

Many questions are posed. One of the most troubling: "Has our intervention really solved internal problems?"

A country-by-country rundown suggests that many are no better off after a deluge of U. S. bullets and dollars.

American qualms about the nation's course, yesterday and today, are quoted.

Mark Twain assails "American expansionism." Marine hero Brig. Gen. Smedley Butler, once Philadelphia's champion of public safety, ticks off

military actions that earned him "honors, medals and promotions," then adds, "Looking back on it, I feel I might have given Al Capone a few hints."

Charles A. Meyer, assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, deplored "an ironclad umbilical cord that runs from us to the southern half of this hemisphere . . . It's high time that we treat a sovereign nation like a sovereign nation."

Sen. Frank Church, of the Foreign Relations Committee, equates U. S. and USSR interventionism and opines "We've got to become less fearful of other people's ideologies."

Adds former Ambassador to Chile Ralph Dungan, "There has to be a good deal of live and let live."

The CIA is among numerous targets in this devastating documentary, patently so controversial that several NET stations—not including financially hard-pressed WHY-TV — promptly scheduled P. S. panel discussions.

The harrowing hour begins and ends with Moratorium for Peace picket signs bearing dead GIs' names being stacked in a coffin. These emotional scenes hardly suit the rest of the program's relentless rationality.

'Uncle Sam Magoo' Is Pageant Guide

The aforementioned "Uncle Sam Magoo," with its near-blind "star" a red-white-and-blue-clad guide through the American past, was a primitive patriotic pageant, a dimvisioned and dimwitted version of U. S. history.

If there's anything children don't need, it's a "Magoofy" hour of chauvinism in which Indians and Orientals are caricatured and Leif Ericson and Christopher Columbus speak with low-comedy accents, but a black commercial-including sponsor warily uses only two raised hands to represent Negro slavery.

This supposedly "light-hearted" but continuously heavy-handed collection of clichés, libeling two Philadelphiaans, Ben Franklin and Betsy Ross, among other historic personages, suggested that the moronic Magoo wasn't the only one connected with the project: obviously shortsighted.

In this instance UPA has perpetrated a PU.

STATINTL

Approved For Release 2002/01/22 : CIA-RDP72-00337R000200130054-4

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