
SOCIETY

meant to "undercount" the homeless population (and thus reduce the need for more federal aid), there is some evidence that HUD's estimates are too high. Sociologists at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, surveyed 245 blocks in downtown Chicago in 1985 and 1986 and estimated that 5,000 people were without shelter at least one night each year—one-third of HUD's estimate for the city.

Wooster concludes that Snyder and Co. have yet to prove that more federal aid for the homeless is necessary. Indeed, he asks, given the "sketchy evidence offered by the homeless lobby, why should taxpayers believe there is a 'homeless crisis?'"

PRESS & TELEVISION

A 'Living-Room War'?

"Television Reporting of the Vietnam War; Or Did Walter Cronkite Really Lose the War?" by Edward Fouhy and Lawrence W. Lichty, in *The World and I* (Apr. 1987), 2850 New York Ave. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Watching overseas mayhem on a 19-inch screen has now become a common American experience. But for those who watched the struggle in Vietnam, America's first "living-room war" (1965-73), on television, seeing burning huts and bloodied villagers was disconcerting. Did these and other images cause public disaffection and American defeat in Vietnam?

No, say Lichty, a communications professor at Northwestern University, and Fouhy, an executive producer at NBC News. They argue that the electronic media *followed* rather than *molded* public opinion.

The authors analyzed televised evening news coverage of Vietnam beginning in August 1965. Until the summer of 1967, TV news reports were generally very positive about the course of the war. Sixty-six percent of guests appearing on television interview shows between 1966 and 1970 could be classified as "hawks" (as opposed to 41 per cent by 1971).

Journalists actually stressed new technology, superior weaponry, and bombing capabilities, which, the authors say, "gave a feeling of progress." In August 1965, CBS's Morley Safer ended a broadcast about Cam Ne village saying "there is little doubt that American firepower can win a military victory here." Three weeks later Walter Cronkite said that "in the biggest American victory yet, the Marines . . . are rooting the isolated Viet Cong out of bunkers and pillboxes."

As early as 1966, however, public support was ebbing in spite of these optimistic reports. In March of that year, Gallup polls showed that 25 percent of the American public thought that sending troops into Vietnam had been "a mistake"; by May that figure rose to 36 percent.

Media coverage began to reflect public pessimism. Harrison Salisbury's Christmas 1966 *New York Times* stories from Hanoi reported that bombing "was more likely stiffening the will of the North Vietnamese." With televised coverage of the operations code-named Cedar Falls and Junction City, TV reporters began to question official estimates of success.

PRESS & TELEVISION

The Tet Offensive of 1968 united Washington opinion and the media against Lyndon Johnson's conduct of the war. Tet, the surprise communist attacks on South Vietnam's cities, "paralyzed the administration," say the authors. "Whatever ability President Johnson might have had to rally public opinion to the war was lost."

The myth that television caused America to lose the Vietnam war persists. "The war that Americans saw was almost exclusively violent, miserable, or controversial," wrote General William Westmoreland in his memoirs. But in the end, Lichty and Fouhy conclude, TV's impact was mostly to reinforce the prevailing homefront mood of the time.

Freeing the Airwaves

"The Empire Builders" by Rinker Buck and Peter Ainslie, in *Channels: The Business of Communications* (Apr. 1987), 19 West 44th St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

In Western Europe, television has traditionally been controlled by the state. But during the past five years, nearly 20 privately owned networks have been created to compete with state-owned broadcasters for viewers.

Television in Europe is attracting so many entrepreneurs, say Buck and Ainslie, a senior editor and the managing editor, respectively, of *Channels*, that "if every channel and satellite service planned in Europe comes to fruition, by 1990 there will be an annual need for 500,000 hours of programming to fill them."

Private television has existed in Britain and Italy for years. Since 1982, five other European nations have introduced private networks. France has licensed two new private networks, La Cinq and Canal Plus, and plans to sell off the state-owned TF-1 network sometime this year. Belgium has authorized both French- and Flemish-language ad-supported networks, and the Roman Catholic Church will soon begin operating Portugal's first commercial channel.

Many investors in private European television control other media. In West Germany, the Bertelsmann publishing conglomerate co-owns the RTL Plus network. French newspaper baron Robert Hersant has a minority interest in La Cinq and is one of two bidders for TF-1.

Some European governments are resisting for-profit television. In West Germany, the postal service charges \$400 to have a home wired for cable television, and German states have imposed lengthy licensing delays for the private Sat 1 and RTL Plus networks. Opposition Social Democrats have vowed to "protect the franchise" of the state-owned ZDF and ARD networks from private competitors.

Although private European networks buy many American TV shows, the authors suggest that "reliance on cheap American programming" may diminish as commercial networks become more profitable. Profits should rise as limits on advertising revenues are lifted. For example, France is the fourth largest industrial power in the world, but only the 15th largest advertising market, due to restrictions on commercials on state-owned television. The eventual lifting of these restrictions, the authors conclude, will be "a bonanza for those in control" of privately run networks.