
PRESS & TELEVISION

*TV and the
Elections*

"Political Campaigns: TV Power Is a Myth" by Thomas E. Patterson and Robert D. McClure, in *Psychology Today* (July 1976), P.O. Box 2990, Boulder, Colo. 80302.

Patterson and McClure puncture some fashionable assumptions about television's influence in American elections. The authors, both political scientists at Syracuse University, analyzed every televised political commercial and network weekday evening newscast during the 1972 Nixon-McGovern contest. They also interviewed more than 600 voters—at the start, midway, and end of the campaign to determine television's impact. Conclusions: In 1972, the networks ignored major issues and the candidates' personal qualifications for the Presidency, devoting most of their film coverage to campaign hoopla.

For example, during the last two months of the campaign ABC, CBS, and NBC each devoted a cumulative total of about five minutes of evening news time to facts about George McGovern's leadership and personal experience, good or bad. And as a three-network average, only 3 percent of the available news minutes were given to the two candidates' highly dissimilar stands on such matters as inflation, welfare, and Vietnam.

In contrast, paid political commercials did convey information to voters on issues, sometimes to the detriment of the sponsoring candidate. But the authors conclude that most voters are immune to political TV advertising aimed solely at "image-building." Those already committed to a candidate because of party affiliation or ideology cannot be converted through television. And, most voters who are undecided 60 days before election day ultimately base their choice on long perceived self-interest, rather than late exposure to a media blitz.

*The Newspapers'
Suburban Problem*

"The Bad News in Store for the *New York Times*" by Chris Welles, in *New York* (Apr. 12, 1976), 755 Second Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Economic analysis of the press is rare. Welles, a *New York* contributing editor, notes the eroding markets of metropolitan newspapers (the public's broadest source of news) and singles out the prestigious *New York Times*, which faces "inescapable long-term contraction."

Even more than other big city papers, the once-complacent *Times* has suffered from the steady exodus of middle-class readers, retail advertisers, and corporate employers to the suburbs. During 1970-75, the paper's advertising lineage dropped from 77 million to 69 million; daily