

STATEMENT BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC)
IN THE SENATE UPON INTRODUCING BILL TO
PROHIBIT PAY TELEVISION, JUNE 11, 1957.

Mr. President, I am sending to the
desk for appropriate reference/a bill to
prohibit the charging of a fee/to view
~~television~~
~~telecasts~~ in the home.

For some time I have been considering
this matter/and I have come to the
conclusion that the result of permitting
pay television to be used generally/would
be the same as having the Congress impose
a new tax on the people of this country.
In effect/the people who now view television
without additional cost, after the purchase
of their sets, would have to start paying
additional fees or charges/or be denied the
privilege of seeing their preferred programs.

Perhaps that would not take place

immediately with the institution of pay television, but I am sure it would soon follow/once pay television were approved.

I have read in the newspapers recently/in connection with the possible transfer of New York baseball teams to the West Coast/that contracts have already been arranged to telecast those games on pay television/instead of free as at present.

Several pay television interests have been lobbying for the approval of their plans for several years. Their motive is the motive of profit.

My interest is the public interest/ and I believe that action should be taken now to protect the public.

If we permit the Federal Communications Commission to grant approval for experimental pay television programs, as

the Commission has decided it presently has authority to do, then we must face the fact/ that it would be most difficult later to tell the experimenters, who had spent millions of dollars, that pay television had been classified as against the public interest.

Persons who had invested their money without being warned by the Congress/ would then have cause to complain because they had not been stopped. Therefore, we should act promptly.

If there were any assurance that pay television would be provided purely as a supplement to present service/ and that no person would be deprived of the privilege of viewing programs now being shown free, then we would not have to be concerned about this matter. But there is no assurance and there can be none/ that programs now seen

free/would not soon be bought up by the producers of pay television programs.

There is no proof that pay television would provide the public with better programs.

The one sure thing about pay television/is that it would cost the public more than the present system.

I feel that the Federal Communications Commission/should have the power to exercise great discretion in matters of scientific concern. The Congress cannot and should not/try to decide questions of scientific detail/after Congress has once established the broad policies which the Commission is to follow.

However, pay television has raised

another question. This is a matter of policy/completely divorced from scientific development. In my opinion/the Congress here has the clear duty of protecting the public interest. I believe we should proceed to do so/by enacting the bill I am introducing.

END