



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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SENATOR DOLE CALLS FOR RESIGNATION OF FCC COMMISSIONER NICHOLAS JOHNSON

In the recent hearing before the Communications Sub-committee of the Senate Commerce Committee, Commissioner Nicholas Johnson of the Federal Communication Commission charged that leading executives of our nation's television networks are a "vicious, evil influence," and he intemperately compared them to child molesters. Language of this sort is not unusual for Mr. Johnson. It is normal, and it may be presumed to reflect his honest opinion of the industry he is charged with helping to regulate.

Commissioner Johnson has frequently used the platform of this Federal agency for the most blatant and outrageous partisan purposes, and his maligning of various other communications carriers has been as utterly unrestrained as his attacks on the television networks.

While the Commissioner is entitled to his assessment of these industries, it would seem that his energies might more effectively be directed toward correcting the real or fancied abuses he claims to be concerned with, rather than using them as a spring board for personal publicity. The greater question is whether a man who reveals a virtually irrational hatred of this nation's communications media is qualified to sit on a commission which supervises those media.

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The Federal Communications Commission is a quasi-judicial body which is supposed to look at each case that comes before it in an unbiased and neutral fashion. Commissioner Johnson is obviously ill-equipped to perform this role. Although his tenure on the Commission is nearly at end, his more immediate departure is clearly warranted by the questions of fitness raised by his hysterical outbursts. It would seem proper for Mr. Johnson to submit his early resignation from the Federal Communications Commission so that he can be replaced with someone more interested in regulation than in fruitless public attacks.

I have today written to a few of the Democrat presidential candidates to ask them to join me in seeking Commissioner Johnson's resignation. To assure that this request for his resignation has no partisan overtones, I think it is necessary to gain their support in this effort. Commissioner Johnson's contempt for our privately-based communications system is not a partisan issue. It is an issue which goes to the heart of the question of free communication so vital to a free society. Communications vehicles must be regulated in the public interest, but it is not in the public interest that they be destroyed. This is as clear as the First Amendment can make it.

I know that Mr. Johnson's clear threat to the intent of the First Amendment will be of as great concern to the Democrat presidential candidates as it is to the rest of the nation. I trust they will join with me in calling for an un-biased and disinterested individual to replace Mr. Johnson on the Federal Communications Commission.

COPY OF SENATOR DOLE'S LETTER ATTACHED:

TEXT OF LETTER TO: SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE, SENATOR GEORGE MCGOVERN, SENATOR HUBERT HUMPHREY, SENATOR HENRY JACKSON, MAYOR JOHN V. LINDSAY, AND GOVERNOR GEORGE C. WALLACE

April 5, 1972

I am sure that you share my belief in the absolute necessity of independent, utterly neutral Federal regulation of this nation's communications carriers. This requirement has always guided and informed the Federal Communications Commission -- as it has our other federal regulatory bodies. That is why I know you share my concern over the intemperate attacks Commissioner Nicholas Johnson has been making on the television networks and other communications carriers of our country.

As you may have noted, Commissioner Johnson recently called those who guide our nation's television networks a "vicious, evil influence", even going so far as to compare them to child molesters. Sadly, this latest attack is only one more in a long series of attacks Mr. Johnson has made on the networks and other communications carriers -- attacks which clearly demonstrate Mr. Johnson's lack of objectivity and his inability to execute his duties properly.

This is an issue which is above party. This government -- and its institutions -- stands today at a cross-roads. We can go forward to assure our people and our institutions of fair, equal treatment before the law and before the government, or we can go back to partisan political back-biting. I know which direction the American people want us to go -- they want us to go forward -- to a less partisan, less political approach which views the long-range public interest as far more important than political advantage.

I know, despite our differences, that we can agree on the wisdom of such an approach, particularly in an area so closely linked to our First Amendment freedoms. That is why I am confident you will join me in seeking to return the FCC to the independent, quasi-judicial function it was established to fulfill. That is why I am confident you will join me in asking for Commissioner Johnson's prompt resignation from the regulatory body he has so misused for partisan purposes.

/s/ BOB DOLE