

Topic Youth Problems

'Television is doing irreparable harm'

'Yes, but what did we use to *do* before there was television?' How often we hear statements like this! Television hasn't been with us all that long but we are already beginning to forget what the world was like without it.

Before we admitted the one-eyed monster into our homes, we never found it difficult to occupy our spare time. We used to enjoy civilised pleasures. For instance, we used to have hobbies, we used to entertain our friends and be entertained by them, we used to go outside for our amusements to theatres, cinemas, restaurants and sporting events. We even used to read books and listen to music and broadcast talks occasionally. All that belongs to the past. Now all our free time is regulated by the 'goggle box'. We rush home or gulp down our meals to be in time for this or that programme.

We have even given up sitting at table and having a leisurely evening meal, exchanging the news of the day. A sandwich and a glass of beer will do - anything, providing it doesn't interfere with the programme. The monster demands and obtains absolute silence and attention. If any member of the family dares to open his mouth during a programme, he is quickly silenced.

Whole generations are growing up addicted to the telly. Food is left uneaten, homework undone and sleep is lost. The telly is a universal pacifier. It is now standard practice for mother to keep the children quiet by putting them in the living-room and turning on the set. It doesn't matter that the children will watch rubbishy commercials or spectacles of sadism and violence - so long as they are quiet.

There is a limit to the amount of creative talent available in the world. Every day, television consumes vast quantities of creative work. That is why most of the programmes are so bad: it is impossible to keep pace with the demand and maintain high standards as well. When millions watch the same programmes, the whole world becomes a village, and society is reduced to the conditions which obtain in pre-literate communities. We become utterly dependent on the two most primitive media of communication: pictures and the spoken word.

- Television encourages passive enjoyment. We become content with second-hand experiences. It is so easy to sit in our armchairs watching others working. Little by little, television cuts us off from the real world. We get so lazy, we choose to spend a fine day in semi-darkness, glued to our sets, rather than go out into the world itself. Television may be a splendid medium of communication, but it prevents us from communicating with each other. We only become aware how totally irrelevant television is to real living when we spend a holiday by the sea or in the mountains, far away from civilisation. In quiet, natural surroundings, we quickly discover how little we miss the hypnotic tyranny of King Telly.

The argument: key words

- 1 Beginning to forget what we did before television.
- 2 Always occupied our spare time; enjoyed civilised pleasures.
- 3 E.g. hobbies, entertaining, outside amusements: theatres, etc.
- 4 Even used to read books, listen to music, broadcast talks.
- 5 Free time now regulated by television.
- 6 Rush home, gulp food; sandwich, glass of beer.
- 7 Monster demands: absolute silence and attention; dare not open your mouth.
- 8 Whole generations growing up addicted; neglect other things.
- 9 Universal pacifier: mother and children.
- 10 Children exposed to rubbishy commercials, violence, etc.
- 11 Limit to creative talent available.
- 12 Therefore many bad programmes; can't keep pace with demand.
- 13 World becomes a village; pre-literate society; dependent on pictures and words.
- 14 Passive enjoyment; second-hand experiences; sit in armchairs, other working.
- 15 Cut off from real world.
- 16 Become lazy, glued to sets instead of going out
- 17 Television totally irrelevant to real living.
- 18 E.g. holiday, natural surroundings; never miss hypnotic tyranny.

The counter-argument: key words

- 1 Nobody imposes TV on you. If you don't like it, don't buy a set - or switch off!
- 2 We are free to enjoy 'civilised pleasures' and still do.
- 3 Only when there is lack of moderation can TV be bad - true for all things.
- 4 People sometimes feel guilty watching TV; absurd idea.
- 5 If you boast you don't watch TV, it's like boasting you don't read books.
- 6 Must watch to be well-informed.
- 7 Considerable variety of programmes; can select what we want to see.
- 8 Continuous cheap source of information and entertainment.
- 9 Enormous possibilities for education: e.g. close-circuit TV - surgery.
- 10 Schools broadcasts; educating adult illiterates; specialised subjects: e.g. language teaching.
- 11 Education in broadest sense: ideals of democracy; political argument, etc.
- 12 Provides outlet for creative talents.
- 13 Many playwrights, actors, etc., emerged from TV.
- 14 Vast potential still waiting to be exploited: colour TV world network: communication via satellite.
- 15 TV is a unifying force in the world.