

STAGE TO TELEVISION: *THE ADVOCATE*

HERBERT SELTZ

The first solid partnership between the Broadway theater and television was announced yesterday by the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company. The agreement makes it possible for a new serious play that otherwise could not be financed for a Broadway production to reach the stage this fall—and simultaneously be televised to the five-city Westinghouse market of Boston, Cleveland, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco, comprising nearly 8 million television homes. Both Westinghouse and the Broadway producers involved saw in the agreement a possible new partnership between the theater and television which could inject new excitement into television and alleviate some of the more severe financial problems faced on Broadway.

—from the New York Herald Tribune, Friday, August 2, 1963

On the evening of October 14, 1963, television viewers in Boston, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and San Francisco were presented with the opportunity to attend, if vicariously, a Broadway opening. The play was Robert Noah's *The Advocate* which was seen in the five Group W (Westinghouse Broadcasting Company) cities at the same time that it played at the ANTA Theater in New York City. This stage-television undertaking, titled "Opening Night on Broadway" by its innovator and producer, Group W,

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was a multifaceted venture that invites examination from many points of view. These could include the validity of the concept, the promotional aspects involved, sales and network pre-emption considerations, the size, composition, and reaction of the TV audience, the effect on the play and on the theater in general, tape syndication and motion picture rights, and the role of the group broadcaster in what heretofore had been the domain almost solely of the networks. While these and other directly and indirectly related aspects of the venture would make interesting research topics, this report is concerned with the stage-to-television transfer process with the emphasis on the latter. What follows is a study and evaluation of the television production and the personnel that were involved in making what TV director Marc Daniels described as a "television production of a play, rather than a television play."

The complete background story of "Opening Night on Broadway" would be a book-length chronicle concerned more with the theater than television, and by necessity must be presented here in an abbreviated form. Perhaps the author and his play, and what did or did not happen to it during the conversion from stage to television, can serve as a starting place. Robert Noah lists 1959 as the approximate date of birth for his play which deals with the final, unsuccessful court appeal in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. In the summer of 1962 it was produced at Michael Ellis' Bucks County Playhouse. Following a two-week run, Ellis and William Hammerstein, the co-producers of the ANTA production, began looking for money to bring the show to New York. Through a newspaper story, they learned of Group W's interest in backing a play and started negotiating with that company's Herman Land and David Aldrich.

As early as 1960 Aldrich, now Group W's Director of Special Projects, had worked out a concept of how to televise a Broadway opening night. Reaction to his plan within the organization, at that time known as the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, was mixed. A year later Herman Land joined WBC as Director of Creative Services. He learned of the idea through the chance reading of a memo, was immediately interested in its development and subsequently was made director of the project for Group W. WBC executives, including president Donald McGannon and programming VP Richard Pack, became increasingly involved and interested as the project picked up momentum. A play, *Seidman*

and Son, was offered by the Theater Guild, and it appeared that the project's launching was imminent.

Even before the *Seidman and Son* negotiations, Group W executives had developed a basic theory and modus operandi for the project. Decisions were made concerning: *the production approach*—the TV drama would be produced separately in a studio, not on a theater stage at the time of a performance, so that both audiences would be served by the best form of production; *the relationship with the theater*—the theater people would make and control all arrangements with the author and actors; and *Group W's posture*—Group W would not merely cooperate with or be interested in the theater, rather it would be “in” the theater as a full-fledged backer of a Broadway play. With the establishment of these and similar policies to guide and back him, Land proceeded with the project.

Theater-television historians will record that Westinghouse's plans to produce *Seidman and Son* did not materialize. What transpired between the spring of 1962, the time of the *Seidman and Son* talks with the Theater Guild, and the presentation of *The Advocate* on October 14, 1963, could, if minutely recorded, fill the cornerstone of some future museum dedicated to the performing arts. Theater owners, organizations of theater owners, unions and guilds, producers, elder statesmen of the theater, and Group W executives (including Land and Aldrich who continued to read and consider other plays) met—negotiated—agreed—disagreed—renegotiated—gave up—and started over—in a continuing series of events that led to the signing of *The Advocate* contract on August 1, 1963. Herman Land summed up the year by saying, “Up unto the moment the contract was signed, no one would have believed it.”¹

The wording of the contract promulgated Group W's aesthetic credo adopted for the project: “A complete respect for the theater coupled with a complete respect for the television medium.” The broadcasters were convinced that the plan would work because they shared mutual responsibilities with Hammerstein and Ellis and felt that in this instance the objectives of the theater and TV were the same. Uppermost in Group W's planning was the desire to represent TV as an artistic medium. Sponsor control of content, script tampering, inappropriate placement of commercials, and other similar sins of which TV is accused were to be avoided.

This idea of mutual trust and respect between the stage and TV interests pervaded each aspect of the project and especially in

respect to the playwright and his play. Having selected *The Advocate*, Group W had accepted a controversial play by TV standards, that because of its theme and setting necessitated the use of strong language including a considerable, again by TV standards, amount of profanity. During the negotiations there was discussion, and some concern, over preserving the integrity and spirit of the stage play. The contract held Noah responsible for making changes to accommodate problems of time and television production and to comply with applicable governmental regulations. In any case, the contract clearly stated that all such changes would be subject to the theater producers and author's prior approval with the one exception of any matter that was covered by Group W's continuity acceptance standards. If such a situation developed, Group W's decision would be final. Furthermore, the contract prohibited the insertion of commercials within the acts of the play and carried a clause to the effect that the TV play and the Broadway play would be the same except for minor line changes necessitated by the TV recording. To support the contract Herman Land wrote Noah a letter to assure him that there would be no tampering with his script.

Following the signing of the contract, the legal and administrative ferment diminished somewhat as Noah, Hammerstein and Ellis, stage director Howard Da Silva, and the company started rehearsing for a two-week run, set for September 17-29, at the Mineola Playhouse. On the day after the Mineola closing (Monday, September 30), the producers, author, TV director Marc Daniels, and Group W executive producer Jack Kuney met to discuss what changes and revisions in the script would be undertaken for the TV recording. Because of the contract, Noah was in a strong position when the question of script changes came up. Noah said, "There were no requests for script changes made by anyone connected with Westinghouse other than Marc Daniels and Jack Kuney." In reference to the number of changes he stated, "There were very few changes made in the script, and almost all of them were suggested by Marc Daniels."

It is interesting to note that in the case of one change, the phrase "He's a dedicated son of a bitch" (changed to "He's dedicated") was also deleted from the stage version as played at the ANTA. This particular piece of editing took place on the second day of taping and was initiated by Hammerstein and Noah. In referring to this change Noah said, "It was a matter of an epithet sounding

far stronger on television than it had ever been meant to sound." Noah felt that TV audiences were not accustomed to profanity, and that when overused it tended to cause a far greater impact than the situation called for. In summing up his general approach to the editing of profanity from his script Noah expressed the following: "In those instances where profanity would have been accepted as routine on the stage, but would not have on television, we cut it. I should point out that wherever I felt profanity served a genuine purpose, it was retained." The television presentation contained approximately 18 hells and damns, and related expressions ranging from "to hell with the affidavit" to "Did you see what I did to those anarchistic bastards the other day?"

As previously indicated, TV director Marc Daniels was responsible for most of the changes that were made to the script. Daniels was not so concerned with strong language as he was with such matters as clarity, exposition, and the wording of transitions. He saw the need to make changes to accommodate the differences that exist between the stage and TV. Daniels, a veteran live and film television director, was selected through the concurrence of both the play producers and Group W. He was hired shortly after the August 1 contract signing, and immediately started exchanging correspondence and meeting with Jack Kuney concerning the TV approach to the play. At this point a few words about what the play looked like on the stage would be helpful if the reader is to understand what follows about the TV approach that Daniels employed.

The theater concept devised by director Howard Da Silva was of the type generally referred to as "area staging." The scenery designed by Ralph Alswang consisted of stylized, painted scrimms to represent offices and courtrooms, and much use was made of waggon-mounted jail cells and bar units backed by a cyclorama in the numerous prison scenes. All downstage action was played on the stage floor, while the upstage area was on a raised platform fronted by three steps that ran the full width of the elevation. Simple furniture and set dressings—tables, chairs, office equipment, courtroom and prison fixtures—were effectively but sparingly used in most scenes. The area lighting was harsh, sombre, and appropriate to the theme and locale of the drama. The lighting often pinpointed areas of action while the majority of the stage was in darkness. Lighting changes followed the actors from scene to scene and served as transitional devices.

Daniels first saw Da Silva's staging during the initial rehearsals

and subsequently at ten of the 14 Mineola performances. During the two weeks at Mineola he never questioned Da Silva or talked with the actors concerning their forthcoming TV assignments. In respect for the stage production and its director, and because he was concerned over confusing the actors with two sets of staging instructions, Daniels observed and planned in silence during the Mineola run and made formal contact with the company only through coproducer William Hammerstein. Daniels refers to this segment of the "Opening Night" venture as a time of frustration. He was never told that he could not become actively involved with the company. As he put it, "I just didn't feel that it would be proper to confuse matters by having two directors around." Da Silva must have felt the same way later on, for even though he was invited to attend the TV taping he never made an appearance at the studio.

The "television production of a play, rather than a television play" approach to the TV staging was supported by several factors. Daniels expressed it this way: "First, I became convinced that what Howard (Da Silva) had in mind for the play's staging was a good idea for me; second, it brought the scenery costs in line as the budget could have never stood realistic sets for all the scenes of the play; and third, I was pretty certain that I would not have time to re-stage the play for TV with the resultant confusion for the actors." This approach was also desirable, and in fact necessary, from the point of view of the "Opening Night" concept which was designed to give the TV viewer the feeling of being in an orchestra seat when the curtain went up.

While little or no major re-staging was initially planned, Daniels did in fact re-stage by adjusting, tightening, re-positioning, and designing new transitions for the TV version. Most of these changes were minor and came about quite naturally as Daniels worked with the actors and cameramen. The more widely spaced stage placements gave way to closer groupings and staging in depth as the camera shots were plotted. Other changes in staging were involved with scene-to-scene transitions, some of which had to be invented for the TV version. Scene changes on the stage that were effectively handled by light cues had to be re-structured since they were now executed by cuts or dissolves between cameras. By necessity this led to the re-positioning of actors and to the script changes previously referred to that Daniels felt necessary to make.

Several scenes had their locations changed. One in particular involving a crowd of reporters was played off-stage at Mineola.

Daniels, because he could stage this action effectively and felt that it was strong visually, played it on camera and provided the TV audience with something that was denied to those at Mineola.

Daniels continued to be concerned with transitions throughout the TV production and used what he considered to be effective transitional devices. These included music bridges, sound and lighting effects, and art work. In several instances Daniels preceded the first shot of a new scene with an appropriate photograph or map. Bob Noah approved of the use of these scene-establishing graphics, but Hammerstein had some reservations. They were used, as was a film clip of a close-up of a stenographer's hand writing shorthand in a steno book. Hammerstein also questioned the use of this visual device feeling it was not needed and distracting.

A first glance at the stage and TV sets might have led one to think that they were identical. They did appear that way, but there were important changes in the TV version which used a specially designed and completely separate set from the one that was used at Mineola and later at the ANTA. In addition to design changes that Daniels requested to improve shooting angles and access for four TV cameras, there were other reasons for not using the same scenery for both the television and stage presentations. Physically, the units designed for Mineola and the ANTA were too large to be effectively handled in a TV studio. Also, any attempt to use the same scenery and stage furniture would have involved the crossing of jurisdictional lines that exist between the stage and TV IATSE locals in New York City. In summing up his thoughts on the set and changes made for TV, Daniels said that since he personally supervised the change in design, he had all the shooting angles he desired. He wanted both sets to look the same, which they did, but a close inspection of the two floor plans would reveal the changes in general layout and in the placement of scenic units that he made to accommodate the demands of television. The same costumes and one hand prop, a brief case, were used in both the stage and TV productions. No changes were made in the costumes other than toning down the whites to satisfy the technical characteristics of the television system. TV make-up was handled by two CBS make-up artists hired on a free-lance basis.

Jack Kuney, who had joined Group W only six months earlier, was ideally cast in his role as executive producer, for he had prior experience in producing "theater to television" drama. As a producer of *Play of the Week* he was responsible for the Phoenix

Theater-Play of the Week collaborations on *Mary Stuart* and *Henry IV, Part I* during the 1960 and 1961 seasons. When questioned about his responsibilities as executive producer for "Opening Night on Broadway," Kuney said, "Because of the unique nature of the project, I felt an even greater sense of obligation as a producer than I would have in the situation of a regular TV drama." While he did not perform the traditional producer's functions of buying a script or auditioning and hiring a cast in the case of *The Advocate*, he did not feel that his problems were lightened. He offered the following sample of the production items that were uppermost in his mind: "What kind of framework would the play be in, who was to direct and how, what kind of schedule would be needed and where would we do it, the stage, the studio, and always the omnipresent budgetary limitations."

The framework consisted generally of the "Opening Night on Broadway" concept and specifically of the format that Kuney devised for the two-and-one-half-hour show. The format (see p. 45 below) was designed to provide the TV viewer with a "front row center" feeling. All aspects of the opening and closing, and intermission features, were planned with this in mind. A dinner-jacketed Henry Fonda was host and appeared a dozen times to introduce acts, intermission features, and commercials. The major items in the format, excluding the play and the commercials, consisted of a brief introductory statement by Group W president McGannon, a stop-motion opening film (mid-town traffic—lobby excitement—ticket-taking), a six-minute animated film on famous opening nights used between acts one and two, an interview with Peggy Wood and Stanley Young of ANTA preceding act three, and a wrap-up conversation between star James Daly and co-producer Michael Ellis.

Kuney was instrumental in selecting Daniels and worked with him in devising the intricate production schedule that made the whole venture possible. Obviously no serious thought was given to televising directly from the theater stage because such an approach was ruled out at the time of the pre-*Seidman and Son* policy talks. The TV budget, announced as \$80,000 by Group W, was Kuney's responsibility to control and administer.² Because of the size of the cast, talent cost was a major budgetary consideration. Co-producer Michael Ellis approached EQUITY and a change was made in the usual EQUITY arrangement that eased this aspect of the over-all budget. Rather than pay the usual one week's Broadway salary for each day of taping and rehearsal, a waiver for

the rehearsal days was obtained. Taping days were still paid on the "week for a day" basis, but rehearsal days were changed to a "week for one-six days." Since there were three days of taping and three days of rehearsal, an actor on call for all six days received the equivalent of four weeks' Broadway salary.³

Another assignment that Kuney handled was the selection of the production facility to be used since Group W had no studios of its own in New York. Video Tape Center was the successful bidder, and its facilities and crews were most adequate and capable in every respect. Technical Director Joe Polito and his crew prepared for their assignments by attending a Mineola performance. Most of the above-the-line production personnel were not supplied by the Center and were retained on a free-lance basis. This group included CBS staffers associate producer Al Sher and assistant director David Roth.

The production and shooting schedule, devised by Kuney and Daniels for the period October 1-6, called for three days in rehearsal hall and three days on camera. The schedule was adhered to with the exception that the camera days ran long. The show was on camera 30 hours and required an additional 16 hours of tape editing, an all-night job that Daniels finished at 7:00 A.M. on the morning of October 8.

The lengthy and somewhat complicated editing task was necessitated by the out-of-sequence shooting schedule that was used. The play was divided into 23 scenes and the shooting schedule was designed to permit the efficient use of scenery and actors. Daniels felt that the "one scene at a time" shooting method made it possible for him to do the job in the time available and also made it easier for the actors since they only had one scene to concentrate on at a time, which they then could forget as soon as the take was completed. His parting thought on the amount of time he had available was "Four days on camera and seven days dry would be more like it."

Kuney, referring to the actors, and recalling experiences based on his previous *Play of the Week* productions said, "Even though they (the actors) are confronted with staging and dialogue changes, such stage to television ventures as this can come off with comparative ease. If you can start with a company that is well rehearsed, it's amazing how flexible people (actors) are." Kuney estimated that without the Mineola run *The Advocate* would have required at least 12 additional hours of camera rehearsal.⁴ There was a general feeling in the studio that the actors, in addition to knowing their

lines, understood the play. Even technical director Polito commented, "Usually the crew has to wait on the actors; not so in this case, we have to keep up with them."

The cast headed by James Daly included Paul Stevens, Martin Brooks, Dino Fazio, Allen Nourse, Tresa Hughes, and Dolph Sweet in major roles. Most of the 24 cast members had previous TV and film experience so the medium was not new to them. They closed at Mineola on Sunday, September 29, took a day's rest while Daniels and Kuney met with the author and stage producers, and started their six-day TV schedule on Tuesday, October 1.

When interviewed about how they felt about the "Opening Night" concept, the cast was unanimous in its praise for the project. Obviously some of this approval can be attributed to the payment that they received for their TV services. There were, however, genuine expressions of interest in the stage to television venture and what it could mean to the theater and to their profession.

No cast member expressed any concern over confusion or awkwardness caused by line, staging, or acting style changes. All felt that they knew the play so well that the new instructions and altered direction caused them little, if any, difficulty. Dolph Sweet said, "In a situation like this a company gets to know each other and plays well together; this usually isn't the case in most straight film or TV shows." Gino Fazio thought that the project might usher in a new era for TV and bring theater to millions. Allen Nourse, a theater, film, and TV veteran, saw no difficulties as far as the actors were concerned and also spoke highly and warmly of James Daly's performance and the strength required to carry his role.

Daly was in every scene except one, and it was a rare moment during the three-day taping session that he was not on camera or rushing to or from his dressing room to make a costume change. After the completion of his last scene on Sunday night, he taped a number of promotional announcements and appeared in a short concluding segment with Michael Ellis. Following what must have been three of the most exhausting days of his career, Daly described the idea of the project and the theme of the play as "terribly stimulating." He spoke of his fondness for the company and what he expressed as a "great feeling" for the show which he had now played in under three directors—Alfred Drake at Bucks County, Howard Da Silva at Mineola, and Marc Daniels on television.

In retrospect it can be reported that the venture came off as

planned with the exception of the hoped-for Broadway success which did not materialize.⁵ The play, as presented on television, was not markedly different in appearance or form from similar presentations such as *Play of the Week*. The uniqueness of the project was not derived from the sights and sounds of the TV drama, but rather from the association with the Broadway event. Some writers and critics, in praising the acting, made reference to a depth and quality of performance seldom seen on television.

During the time of rehearsal and taping the most salient aspect of the six days of TV production, eight counting the editing, was the smoothness of the production operation. The countless hours of pre-planning paid off when all of the components were brought together in the TV studio. Everyone was prepared and required only direction, which Marc Daniels effectively provided, to efficiently accomplish his role in the undertaking. It must be remembered that many of the elements of conflict that exist in the performing arts were present. The schedule was tight and demanding, in Daly's and Daniel's case exhausting, yet there were no signs of fatigue or discord. Stage producers Hammerstein and Ellis and playwright Robert Noah were present in the studio or in an observation room adjacent to the control room at all times. They freely and actively participated in TV production decisions with Daniels and Kuney. The protagonists for both the stage and television productions sometimes disagreed and debated, but never did these exchanges interfere with the work in progress. It was obvious that by either design or the most fortuitous of circumstances, the writer, producers, director and actors assembled by Group W, in addition to being talented, were pleasant and cooperative people. Under the circumstances of *The Advocate's* production a different "chemistry" in the studio and control room could have been most damaging. Jack Kuney put it this way: "The situation with Hammerstein and Noah was excellent; it could have been rough with others."

In the interest of experimentation future "Opening Nights" might explore alternate avenues of production. In *The Advocate* great care was taken to provide the TV audience with a faithful reproduction of what was seen and heard on the stage. To be true to the "Opening Night" concept the same actors and dialogue must be used in both media. However, perhaps it is stretching a point, and unduly complicating matters for the TV director, to insist on a TV scenic design originally conceived for the theater. Similar reasoning can be applied to the question of re-staging. In spite of all of the

“shooting the show as it appeared on the stage” talk, a considerable amount of re-staging was done. This couldn’t be avoided, for no competent TV director is going to settle for bad shots or unmotivated moves. Of course, re-staging requires time, so a future project might be planned to include a two-week period for the TV rehearsal and taping. The producers of subsequent projects could also consider the idea of utilizing the services of only one director for both the stage and TV. Such a talent can be found, and his staging-directing approach for both media could provide a variation to the two-man “separate but equal-cooperative but not collaborative” pattern established in *The Advocate* production.

Group W and other producers who might become interested in theater-TV projects should objectively weigh the value of the host and “theater flavor” features. Program elements of this type are obviously synthetic when produced on film or in a TV studio. If theater environment is desirable, the possibility of theater origination should be considered. This idea which can immediately promote cries of “impossible and impractical” from TV and theater professionals must be implemented by a production and technical approach that consists of more than several cameras in the back of the house and a brace of microphones secreted in the footlights. The cost in time and money, and the union, legal, and managerial issues encountered, would be formidable. However, a successful resolution of these problems could provide an interesting and unusual theater experience for the TV audience.

It is still too early to say what the “Opening Night on Broadway” concept means to the theater and television. While many questions remain unanswered, one aim stated by Donald McGannon in his introductory remarks on the TV program was realized. “The limits of the Broadway stage,” said McGannon, “have been extended for TV to bring the theater of Broadway to an audience of millions on opening night.” At the time of this writing Group W has not announced any future “Opening Night” plans, although prior to October 14 press releases made reference to “four to six shows a season.” If Group W and other broadcasters would engage in a series of theater-TV ventures, two goals expressed by David Aldrich could be realized. Aldrich said, “This or similar projects could provide a new source of programming for television, and a new method would be developed for a corporation to invest in the theater on a regular basis.” Over \$150,000 of Group W’s money was posted as tangible evidence of its interest in what no one can deny

was an imaginative and courageous venture. It remains to be seen if Group W and others, after carefully evaluating the lessons learned, will try again to effect a synthesis of the theater and television.

NOTES

1. George Eells details this part of the story in "Riches or Ruin for Theatre?" in the November, 1963, issue of *Theatre Arts*.
2. The actual final figure was approximately \$92,000.
3. The standard EQUITY-AFTRA agreement—EQUITY salary or AFTRA scale, whichever is greater—was not affected by the waiver that Ellis obtained.
4. Another day of camera rehearsal would have been out of the question because the company was scheduled into the ANTA for stage rehearsals with Howard Da Silva in preparation for several preview performances and the opening on October 14.
5. Audience and critical reaction in the five Group W cities was extremely favorable. The Broadway version received mixed reviews and closed after one week at the ANTA.

"Opening Night on Broadway"

The Advocate

FORMAT

1. Relinquishment	:10	16. Act II	47:05
2. McGannon opening statement	1:00	17. Fonda Sc. 7	:20
3. Opening film	1:20	18. Commercial #4 S/B	2:10
4. Commercial billboard	:20	19. Fonda Sc. 8	:25
5. Fonda Sc. 1	2:05	20. Peggy Wood, Stanley Young	7:00
6. Commercial #1	1:00	21. Fonda Sc. 9	:10
7. Fonda Sc. 2	:20	22. Commercial #5	2:10
8. Act I	33:35	23. Fonda Sc. 10	:30
9. Fonda Sc. 3	:10	24. Act III	29:10
10. Commercial #2 S/B	2:10	25. Fonda Sc. 11	:15
11. Fonda Sc. 4	1:30	26. Commercial #6	1:00
12. Film (opening nights)	6:20	27. Fonda Sc. 12 (possible cut)	:10
13. Fonda Sc. 5	:10	28. Daly-Ellis interview	2:30
14. Commercial #3	2:00	29. Fonda Sc. 13	:10
15. Fonda Sc. 6	:25	30. Commercial billboard	:20
		31. Credits	2:05

In addition to the responsibility to inform, there is another responsibility that should never be forgotten—the responsibility to respect certain basic American principles. The right to be considered innocent until proven guilty, the right to a fair trial, the right of privacy, the right of protection against becoming branded by association or accusation—all of these are basic to our way of life.

All of us who have a responsibility to report must be certain that in our efforts to inform the American people, we never unwittingly threaten individual rights.

We must be sure that the presence of equipment and news personnel who will carry the printed story and the words and face of an accused or a witness to millions, never place unusual pressures upon that person.

We must always strike a balance between the need to inform the American people against the need to protect an individual's rights. We must consider whether innocence or guilt recede in the minds of millions who see or read the story of an accused or a witness, and remember only his name and the crime with which he is connected.

Leonard H. Goldenson

American Broadcasting-Paramount Theatres, Inc.
at the Franklin Institute, Philadelphia
January 17, 1964

We live in a time of great stress—international stress, social stress, personal stress. We cannot in television avoid reflecting this situation. Nor must we, of course, fail to register the fact that human beings, in spite of the uncertainties and fears that hang over them, contrive to love and be happy, to invent simple joys and healthy amusements. But the background of our lives is sombre. I am sometimes asked: Why do you not put on more cheerful plays? The answer is that the writers of plays do not, on the whole, find the world a cheerful place to live in. As a writer I sympathize with them. Why, I am asked, do they deal with such unpleasant topics? The answer is that these topics thrust themselves upon us wherever we look. I wonder whether these critics have ever reflected that the most blameless and optimistic of plays and films were produced under the great dictatorships. Stalin insisted that no blush be brought to an innocent cheek by a work like Shostakovich's *Katerina Ismailova* and was most absolute for virtue. Meanwhile, his camps and interrogation rooms were full; the firing squads busy. There are those who suggest that we should show the world not as it is but as it ought to be. But, to take a small sample, so long as a large number of our society—a considerable cross-section, let us say, of the people in this hall—continue to smoke or drink as a matter of course, it would be wrong for us to pretend that society is made up of teetotalers and non-smokers. Our responsibility can be expressed in this way: we must present a recognizably true picture of the society in which we live, but reporting—I use the word in its widest sense—must not be confused with advocacy.

Stuart Hood

“The Prospect Before Us”
BBC Lunch-time Lecture