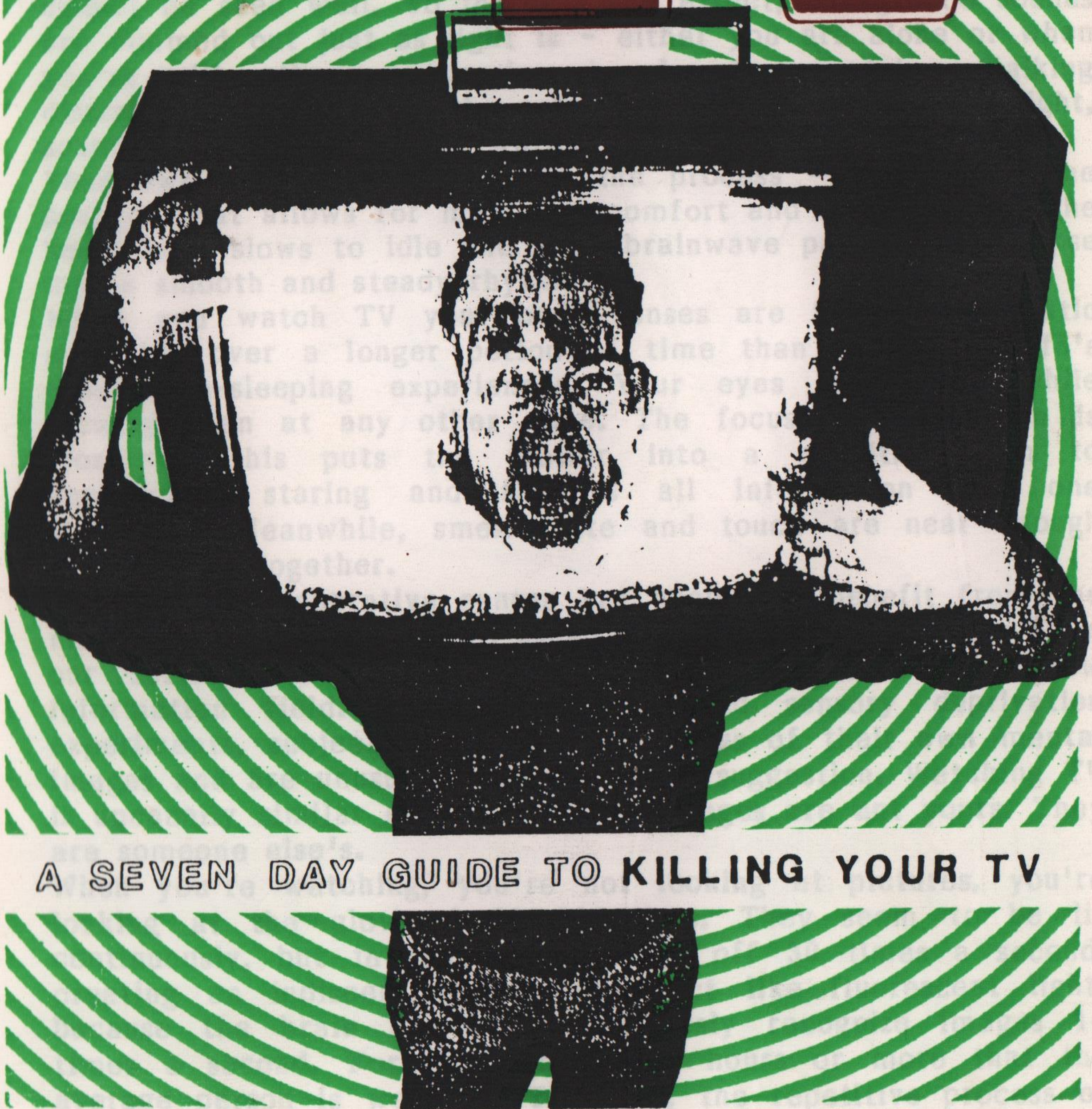


# TV Times



A SEVEN DAY GUIDE TO KILLING YOUR TV

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## Institute of Social Disengineering

at Box B, 111 Magdalen Rd, Oxford OX4





# MONDAY

## IT'S NOT WHAT YOU WATCH - ITS THAT YOU'RE WATCHING

TV is watched in darkened rooms; some people leave on small lights, or daylight filters in, but it's a requirement of viewing that the set be the brightest object in the environment or it cannot be seen well. To increase the effect, background sounds are dimmed out just as light is - either you are alone or when you're with others a premium is placed on quiet as talking distracts attention from the set. Dim out the people, the light, sounds and the rest of the world.

Your own body is also part of the process - you choose the position that allows for maximum comfort and least motion. The heart beat slows to idle and even brainwave patterns will lapse into a smooth and steady rhythm.

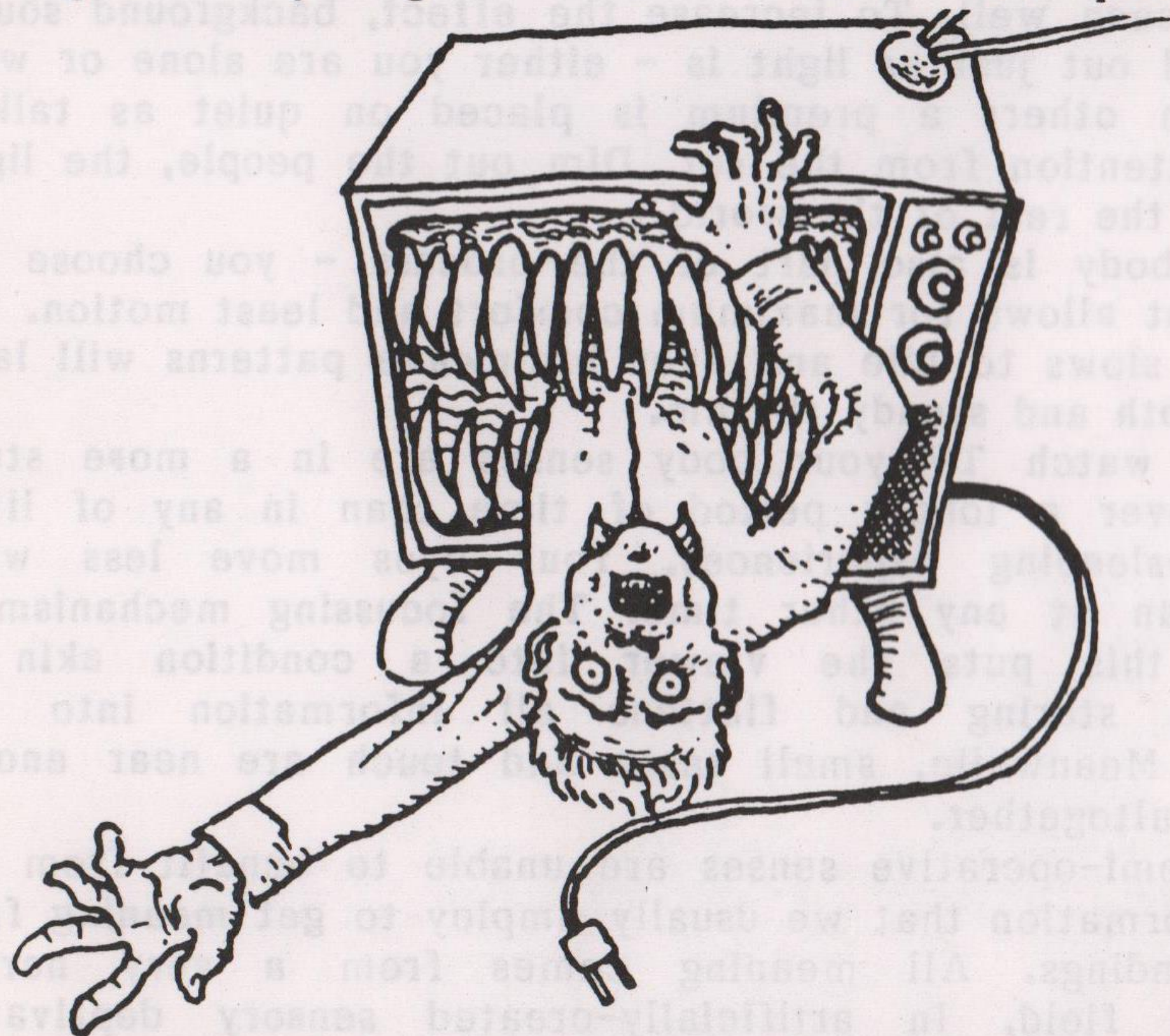
While you watch TV your body senses are in a more static condition over a longer period of time than in any of life's other non-sleeping experiences. Your eyes move less while viewing than at any other time. The focussing mechanism is frozen - this puts the viewer into a condition akin to unconscious staring and flattens all information into one dimension. Meanwhile, smell taste and touch are near enough eliminated altogether.

The two semi-operative senses are unable to benefit from the mix of information that we usually employ to get meaning from our surroundings. All meaning comes from a very narrow information field. In artificially-created sensory deprivation experiments, subjects have only the focus of their own mental images and are unusually susceptible to suggestion. Watching TV is uncannily similar except that **the images are not yours.** They are someone else's.

When you're watching, you're not looking at pictures, you're looking at the glow of 300,000 dots. They seem to be lit continuously, but in fact they all go off 30 times a second, creating an indiscernible flicker effect like fluorescent light, because the brain can only consciously recognize images 10 times a second. For the entire four hours or more that the average person is watching TV daily, the repetitive process of

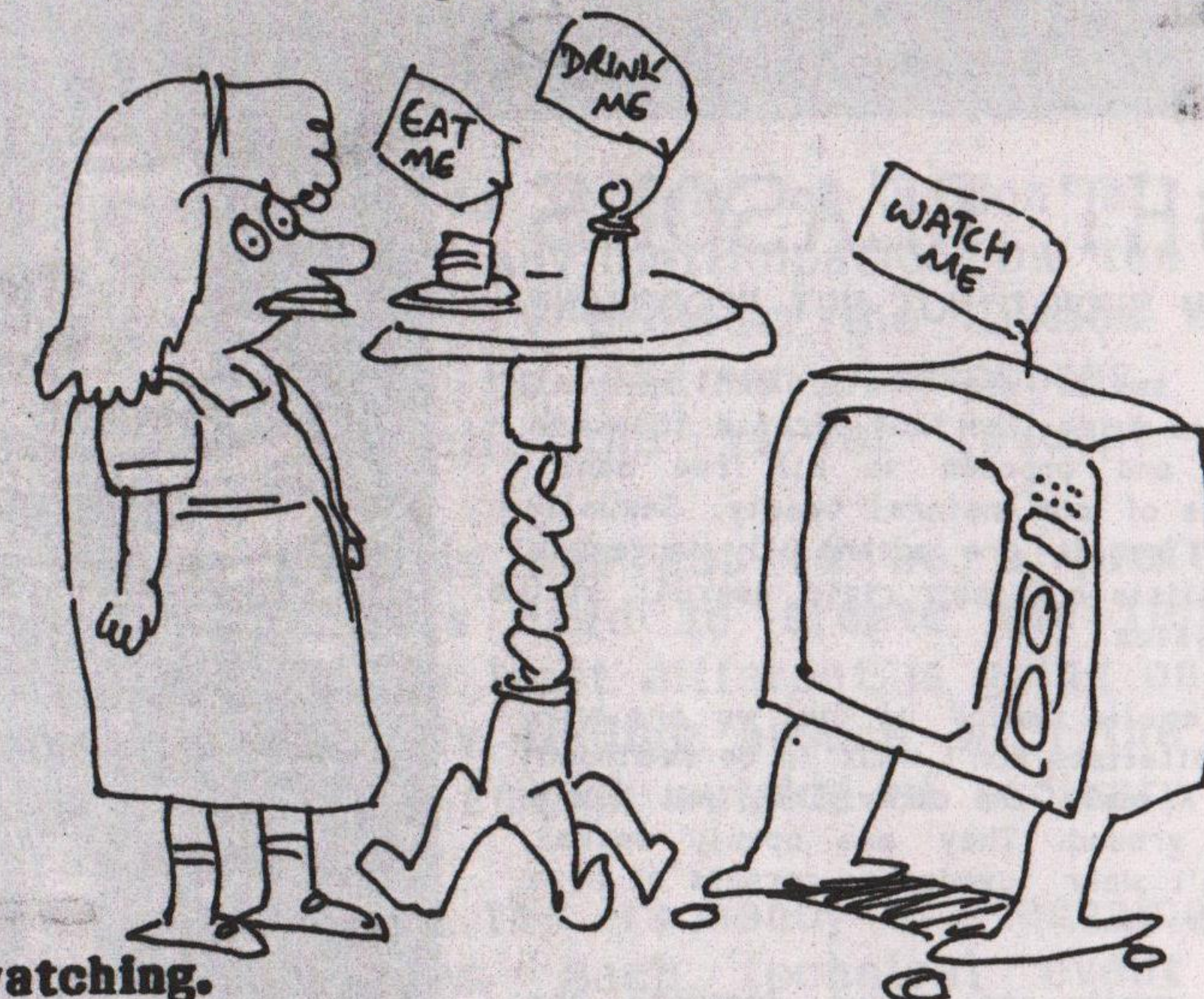


constructing images out of dots, following scans and vibrating with the beats of the set and the electronic rhythm goes on...eventually the conscious mind gives up noting the process and merges with the experience, opening up to whatever the set wishes to implant. Repetition over time reinforces the effect. The images don't actually exist - they are only a series of dots that can't be observed as you would observe another person. As human beings habituate to repetitive light stimuli, the brain decides that there is nothing of interest going on - at least nothing that anything can be done about - and quits processing



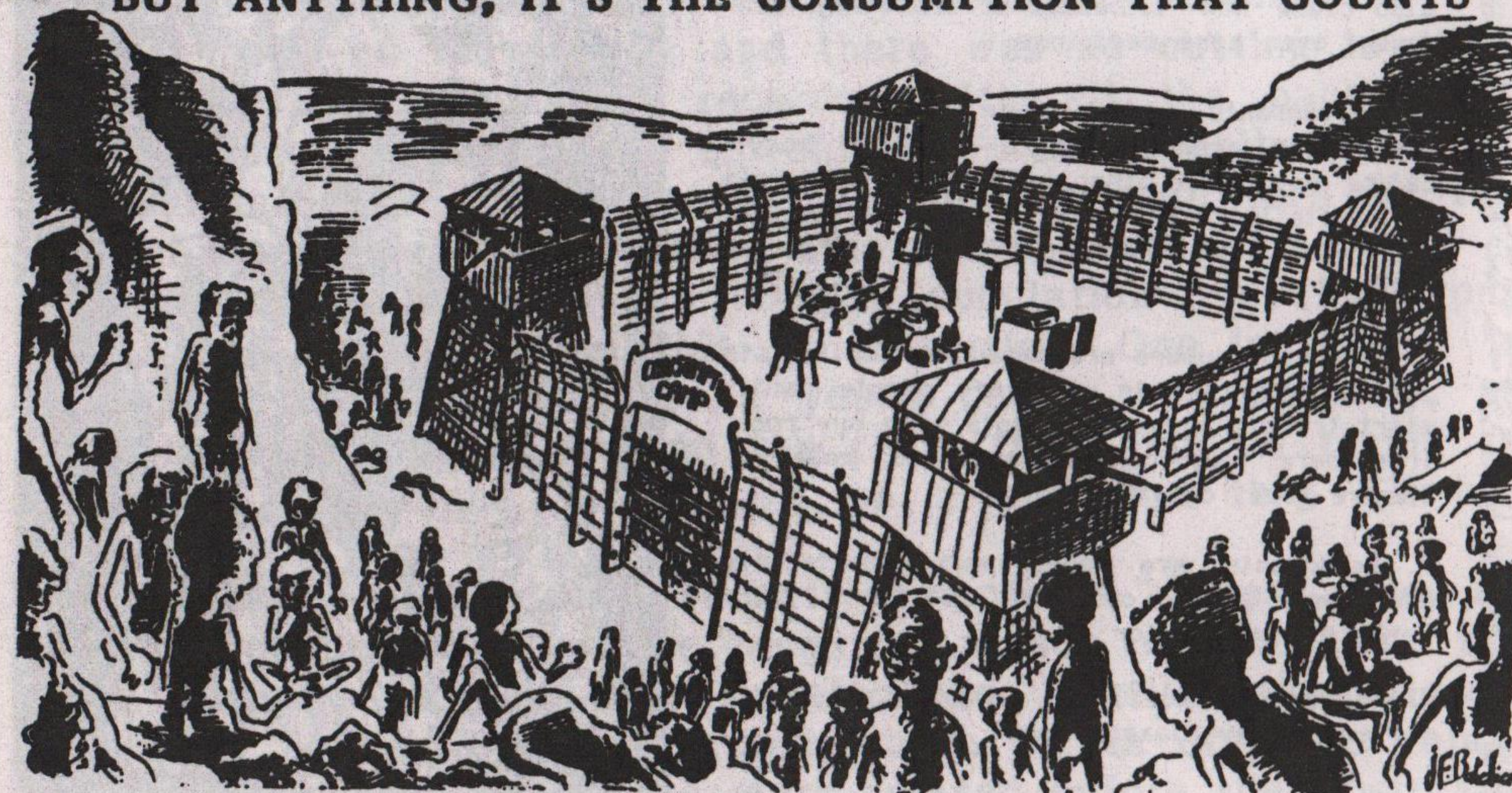
the information that goes in. TV information enters unfiltered and whole. Once the images are inside you, they imprint upon your memory. I can prove this to you. Please bring to mind the Bionic Man, Captain Kirk or Spock. You have never met these people (they are fictional characters). Now would you please erase these TV people from your mind. Make them go away. Everyone knows that advertisements are trying to get us to do something: buy the product. We know the people in the ad are actors in fictional situations - we know all this but we very often act on the ad, for the image of the product goes into your head and from then on, you've got it - there's no letting go.

**There is no question that someone is speaking into your mind and wants you to do something.**



- 1 keep watching.
- 2 carry the images around in your head.
- 3 buy something.
- 4 tune in tomorrow.

**BUY ANYTHING, IT'S THE CONSUMPTION THAT COUNTS**





## EIGHT REASONS

### WHY YOU SHOULD NOT BUY DEODORANT

1. Body smells are erotic and sensual. Capitalists don't like that because they are impotent and opposed to all free manifestations of our natural beauty. Sexually awakened people are potentially dangerous to capitalists and their rigid, asexual, status symbol system.
2. Body smells remind us that we are animals. Capitalists don't want to be reminded of that. Animals are dirty. They eat things off the ground. They are openly sexual. They don't wear tuxedos or corsets or have their hair done.
3. Body smells are unique. Everyone has their own body smell. Capitalists don't like individuality. There are millions of body smells but only a few deodorant smells. Capitalists like that.
4. Deodorants are harmful. Capitalists like that because they are always looking for new illnesses to cure. Capitalists love to invent new medicines. Medicines make money for them and win them prizes. They also cause new illnesses so that they can invent even more medicines.
5. Deodorants hide the damage that capitalists' products cause to your body. Eating meat and other body pollutants sold by capitalists makes you smell. Capitalists don't want you to stop wearing tights or eating body pollutants.
6. Deodorant users are insecure. Capitalists like insecure people. Insecure people don't start trouble. Insecure people also buy room fresheners, hair conditioners, and makeup. They're great consumers.
7. Deodorants are unnecessary. Capitalists are very proud of that and they win marketing awards for it.
8. Deodorants cost you money. Capitalists are especially pleased about that.



## TUESDAY

TV does not further positive thought or action of any kind because it does not require any participation on the viewer's part, merely passive intake. TV projects the illusion of human feelings while requiring no human responses or any communication from yourself, the viewer (except to keep watching).

As human activities go this has got to be a pretty boring experience, so TV producers have to create the fiction that something new, unusual or at least different is going on.

They do this by outrageously fooling around with the imagery, and by choosing content far enough outside of ordinary life that it can qualify as interesting.

Turn on your telly and count the frequency of 'technical events' - cuts, zooms, voice-overs. Each technical event - each alteration of what would be observed in reality - is intended to keep your attention from wandering. In the average programme you'll find about ten technical events in a minute; that is, what would be real is interrupted about every six seconds. There is rarely a period of more than twenty seconds without any sort of camera trickery at all.

Each time a viewer's fixation to the screen might begin to wane, another technical event keeps the subject attached. If the camera made no movements and there was no cutting in time and place - if it merely recorded with all the pauses the conversations and experience of real life - there really would be no point in having TV on at all. You might as well turn off the set and have a real conversation with a real person.

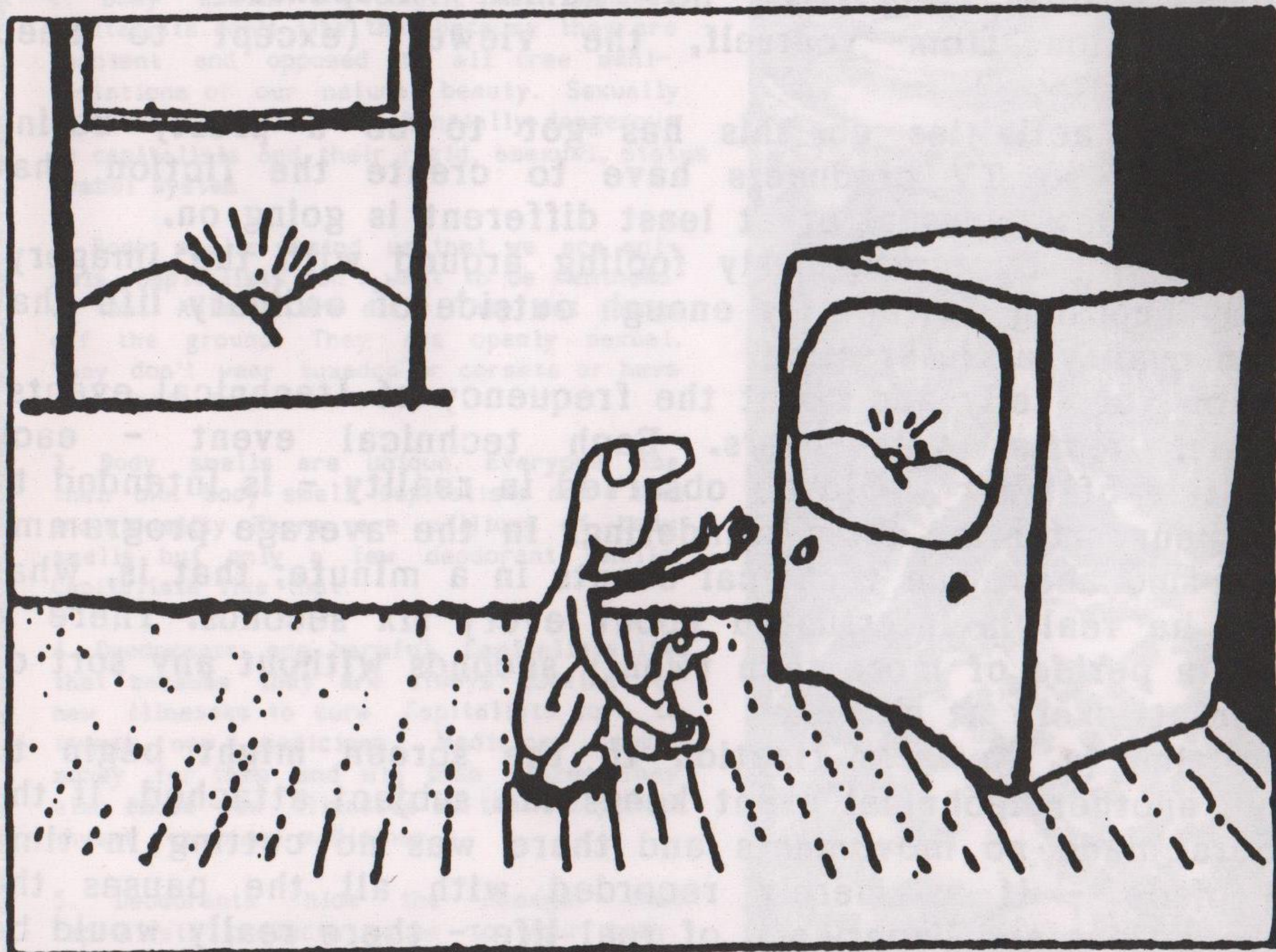
A number of effects on the viewing population have been put forward as resulting from this TV distortion. One is that it is responsible for hyperactivity in young people - apparently, as they throw themselves around the room they may be trying to recapture the unique perspective on a situation that TV has shown them!

The University of Chicago's recently completed 13 year study on TV has concluded that "The longer a person watches TV, the more drowsy, bored, sad, lonely and hostile the viewer becomes". Although many viewers watch TV in order to relax, the survey found people were more relaxed before they switched



on the set.

The medium certainly contributes to a decline of attention span and ability to amuse ourselves; the effortless, ever-amusing TV experience makes actual activity seem too much like hard work. Leaving TV to talk or go outside the room becomes unsatisfactory, all as a result of technical hypes. Reality no longer excites - it must be **seen secondhand** to be experienced.



*"People who have been taught, or conditioned, to listen passively to the warm verbal communications coming from the TV screen are often unable to respond to real persons because they arouse so much less feeling than the skilled actor. Worse, they lose the ability to learn from reality because life experiences seem much less interesting than the ones they see on the screen."*

*The Informed Heart - Bruno Bettelheim*

When reading print, great areas of sensory experience are felt to be missing. Readers experience a necessity to translate images into flesh and statements into actions. TV, by contrast, seems complete in itself. Each TV experience seems discrete, self-sufficient, true, judged and motivated and understood in

terms of itself alone. Concepts such as causation and purpose appear irrelevant.

The possibility that viewing creates a feeling of activity, of being there and having an experience, raises the question: what effect does the constant intake of a simulated reality have upon the viewer's perception of actual reality? TV substitutes a secondary, mediated version of experience for direct experience



***"Don't you understand? This is life, this is what is happening. We can't switch to another channel."***

of the world. When TV is accepted as real (the medium makes it seem that much more exciting), then its difference from the reality is obscured. The real world itself takes on a tinge of fantasy, personal experience is devalued because it fails to come up to the expectations created by televised 'life'.



By blurring the distinction between real and unreal, TV dulls sensitivity to real events and the reality of a situation is diminished, and it is possible to react to it less emotionally, more as a spectator. People begin to act as if they were dealing with inanimate objects not with human beings at all; another person becomes just a thing and you can 'turn them off' with a knife or a gun just like changing channels on a TV set.

By the time a child is fourteen, (s)he has watched the violent assault or destruction of nearly 18,000 human beings on TV. But, and it's a big but - complete censorship of violence from the TV screen will not reduce the dehumanizing effects of viewing - six hours daily of Terry and June seem just as likely to affect ability to respond to human realities as an equal amount of blatantly violent programmes. Or consider it this way: it is not so much the violence on the screen that leads to anti-social crime and violence; it is the craving for a constant happening, the conditioning by the constant dramatic vibration on the screen which equates nondrama with a feeling of nonexistence. As often as not, violence in the streets is a form of self-provided entertainment. A bloke called Romain Gary said that.

*"The separation between the real and unreal becomes blurred...the consequences of this reappear in the papers and on the news:*

*A woman passes a burning building and says to her friend, "Don't worry, they're probably making a TV picture".*

*An American Air Force pilot returns from carpet bombing in Baghdad and says of his massacre - "Man, it was just like on TV".*

*A man charged with the brutal murder of a six year old girl remarks, "I don't know the girl so why should I have any feelings about what happened to her".*

*Thirty seven people see a young woman murdered in their courtyard and look on passively without coming to her aid as if it were a television drama".*

AS HUMANS HAVE MOVED

INTO TOTALLY ARTIFICIAL ENVIRONMENTS

OUR DIRECT CONTACT WITH

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LIKE ASTRONAUTS FLOATING IN SPACE

WE CANNOT KNOW UP FROM DOWN

OR TRUTH FROM FICTION

CONDITIONS ARE RIPE

FOR THE IMPLANTATION

OF ARBITRARY REALITIES





# WEDNESDAY

## LIVING IN A ZERO STYLE



Brutal and overt methods of confining awareness are a thing of the past. Today we are simply plugged into TV. Isolated from one another in private cars, single-family dwelling units and staring at TVs for most of our leisure-time, there is little community and shared personal information has become a rarity. With no windows into other people's lives left, there is recourse to TV. TV becomes everyone's intimate adviser, teacher, guide and director of appropriate behaviour. To be sure, its control over us is not total but the apparent ease with which people seem to be willing to internalise TV's perspective seems to point to the willingness to accept its pitifully false, surrogate



'community' when faced with the loneliness of none.

The American Jack Paar, on his very popular 'The Tonight Show' once asked his chat show audience groupee, Miss Miller, why she turned up so often. He expected a compliment; instead her desolating reply was, "Because I'm lonely". Paar's only option was to appeal in desperation for an early commercial break.

The isolation causes us to imagine that others are happy, we wonder why happiness escapes us and look to advertisements for the key to satisfaction. You are (the ads imply) what you buy, and you can change your life by spending money. Every commodity a packaged promise. So magically instant: happiness is obtainable **right now** if you purchase the approved brand. In fact the product can be anything for it is feeling which the ads peddle - identification is made not with what it is so much as the emotion it can produce in its owner.

It's a tough hostile world - you need security - insurance services, alarm systems and deodorants will 'protect you'.

Isolated and anonymous? Impulse Manslaughter PlastiSmell will lead you into accidental and romantic encounters with beautiful men or women. Don't delay - without it you'll remain a dull and faceless extra in the crowd scenes.

Worried about 'looking good' in the toilet? Decorated toilet paper will solve for you this dilemma of modern life. Let us tell you - it's one less thing to worry about.

The bliss of a cleaner than clean kitchen floor, "Mmmm...I love that April freshness".





# THURSDAY

## A HANDFUL SPEAK - THE REST LISTEN

TV is the most important medium of our culture because for most people TV is culture. Never before have so many people in so many places plugged into the same common system of messages, images and information while having so limited a part in creating, or being able to affect, that system.

TV is our chief organized source for learning what other people think. It constitutes the basic information about the world and its people and its people's public opinion which we use to decide how to act within our society.

Other possible sources of information, such as academic research, are difficult, time-consuming and often expensive to gain access to. Direct, unmediated experiences outside a limited sphere of contact are getting fewer and far between. When people step out of their private cars and go indoors, TV steps into their minds - welcome to the immense and unlimited power of TV.

Since there is no general counter-source of information, the limited perspectives of the media become the limits of ours. A small number shapes the common consciousness of what is, what is important, and what can be. Innumerable events are filtered out, and we won't know what they were and so cannot have an opinion about them. We know only what we are given us by those privileged with money, access and authority of position. TV appears to explain everything but leaves intact the mystery of its select domination over us.

Whoever controls TV defines reality for everyone else. Truth is



of course available - but only for fanatics; and what we discover will only be personal knowledge for no one else will probably take the time off from watching the telly to listen.

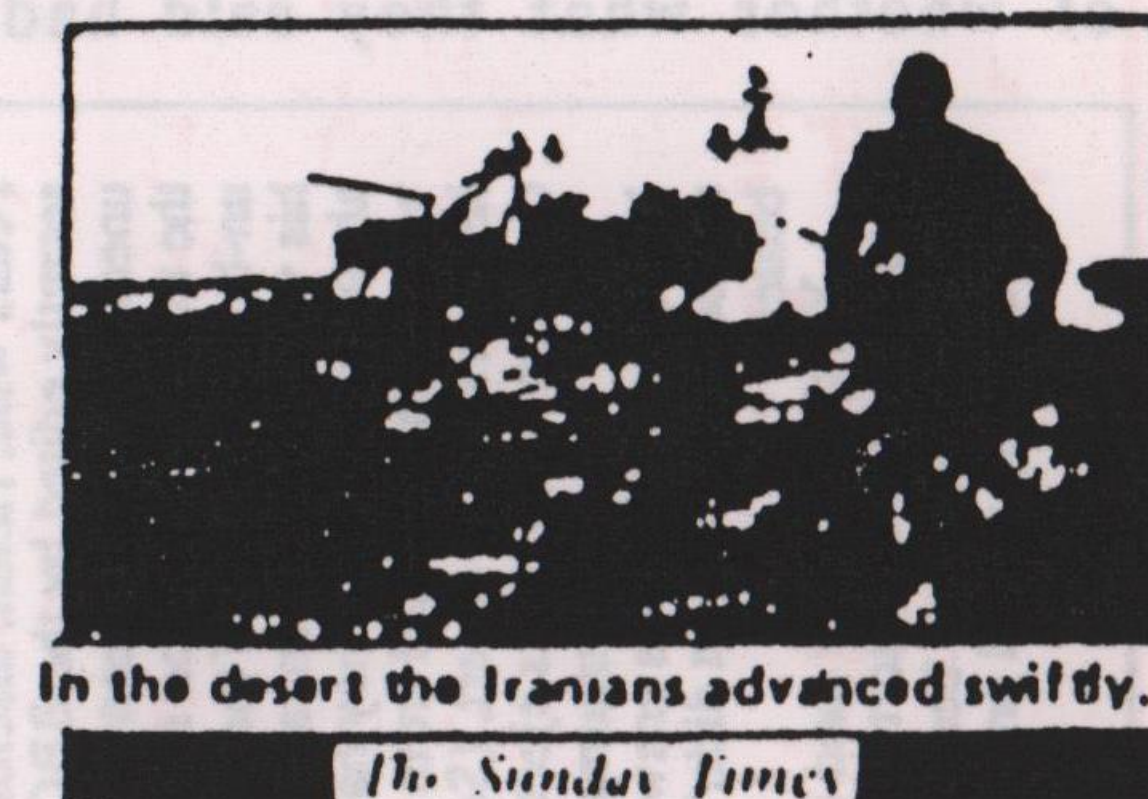
Those outside the Establishment need to rally hundreds of people into confrontative acts to get any extensive (but most likely unfavourable) coverage. On the other hand money can buy access to the public mind (Richard Branson for example).

Watching the news there is no way of telling what is true from what is not. It is filled with information that we can't possibly know is true - the only way to know for sure if something happened is to be present at the time the event took place. So we take the information on faith for without body of knowledge to the contrary it is must be the truth. In this way reality becomes belief and it is then possible for news to exist only within the media and nowhere else in the real world. What a concept! Let me explain this with an example:



These stories, involving illusory guerrilla movements and the like, would be reported in the evening news; policy decisions such as dispatch of troops or 'military aid' would then be made on the basis of this false information.

In April 1976 it was discovered that CIA operatives in far off, difficult to contact areas of Africa and South America had been feeding totally fictitious stories to over 200 newspapers, news services, radio and TV outlets and publishers.



As well as making fact from fiction TV can magic something not to happen. As primary source of reality whatever is not on the news never happened.

Socially and politically, it purges all references to any alternatives. It delivers the all-pervasive norm, whatever is offered as realistic cannot be faulted; anything else (such as our counter-information) is so unheard of it must be unrealistic. As



You pays your money...

## The trade gap narrows—but exports fade

Guardian,  
March 15, 1975

## Trade gap wider, but City cheerful

Liverpool Daily Post,  
March 15, 1975

...and takes your choice!

the controller of knowledge, television makes it impossible to imagine a different social structure from the modern rhythm of work-consume-work-watch telly-consume...

Under the oppressive possibility of only one world view, we are conditioned and adopted to the system's modes of behaviour: competition, aggression, charm, manipulation... For example, heavy TV viewers have been found to over-estimate the amount of violence that occurs on the streets. In expectation of violence they trust others less and act aggressively in any new or unknown encounter - thereby confirming what the people-shapers had declared to be reality in the first place (regardless of whether what they said had been true or not).

**T**OP marks for disinformation during the Gulf War — a keenly fought contest — go to the BBC and Ministry of Defence for their coup over the pictures of the two captured Tornado pilots, Flt Lts John Peters and Adrian Nichol. The two were paraded on Iraqi television in a pathetic attempt by Saddam's secret service to demonstrate the success of Iraqi anti-aircraft defences. Neither said anything on screen which was specially useful to the Iraqi regime.

The way in which the BBC and the MOD used the film skillfully suggested that the two men had been tortured into saying what the secret police in Baghdad wanted them to say. The Press responded loyally, headed by the *Daily Star* which proclaimed: **THE BASTARD IS TORTURING OUR BOYS.**

Blanket press coverage of the battered faces of the two pilots swung huge numbers of sceptical people behind the allies.

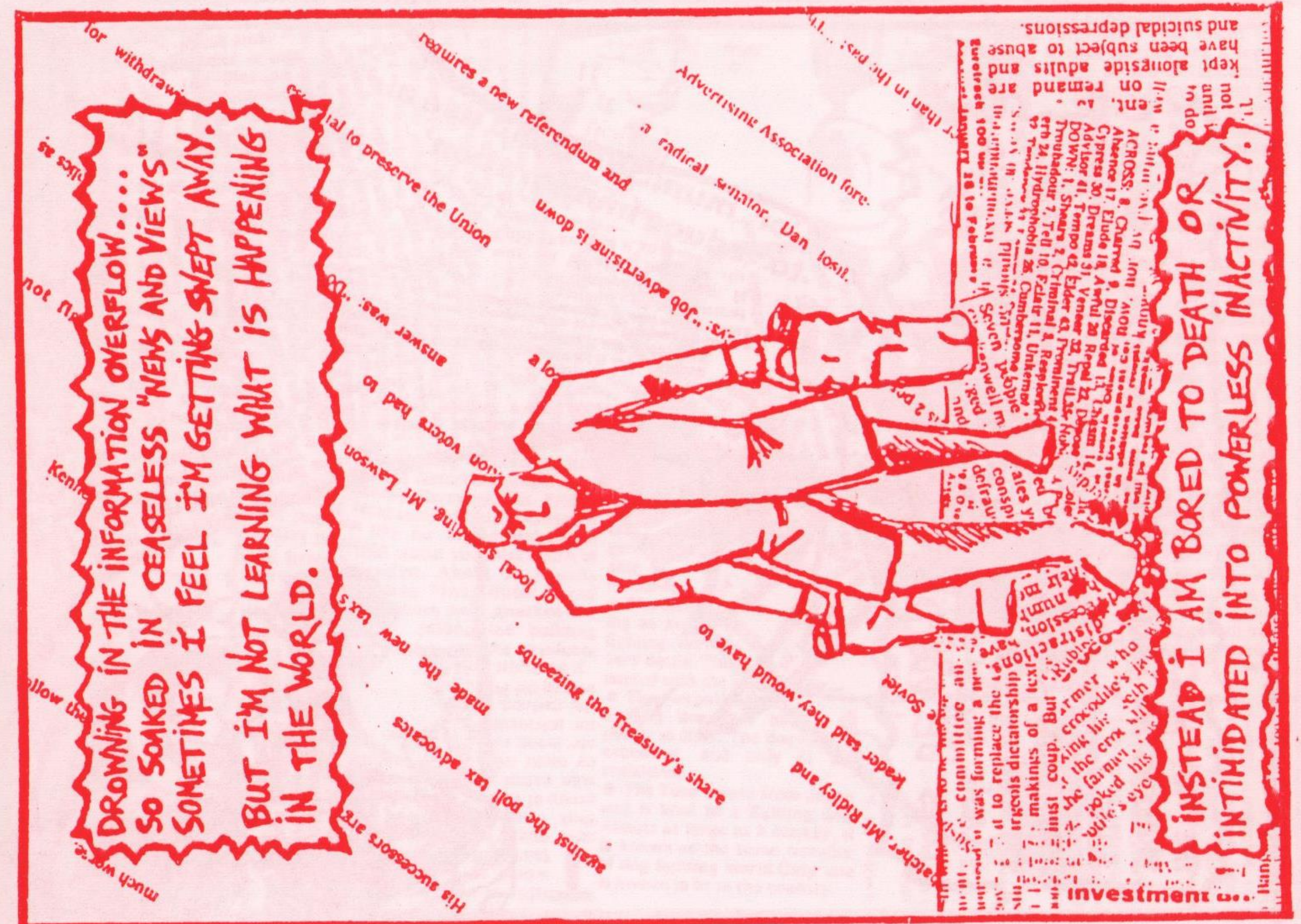
It was only after the war was over that Flt Lt Peters wife, Helen, disclosed that the film had been secretly edited by the BBC. A copy of the complete, unedited film had been handed to her by the BBC at the time, on condition she kept quiet about it. On the un-broadcast part of the tape, Peters sent his love to his wife and children, and told them not to worry about his bruises. They had, he said, been collected when he had ejected from his aircraft and landed head-first in the desert. (Such injuries are very common when pilots eject.)

"He was not so traumatised as we thought" says Mrs Peters. "He was answering questions logically and sensibly. He just didn't look like he'd been beaten."

Yet the Ministry (and the BBC), knowing the pilots had not been tortured, cheerfully told the media that they had been — and the media unanimously passed on the bad news.

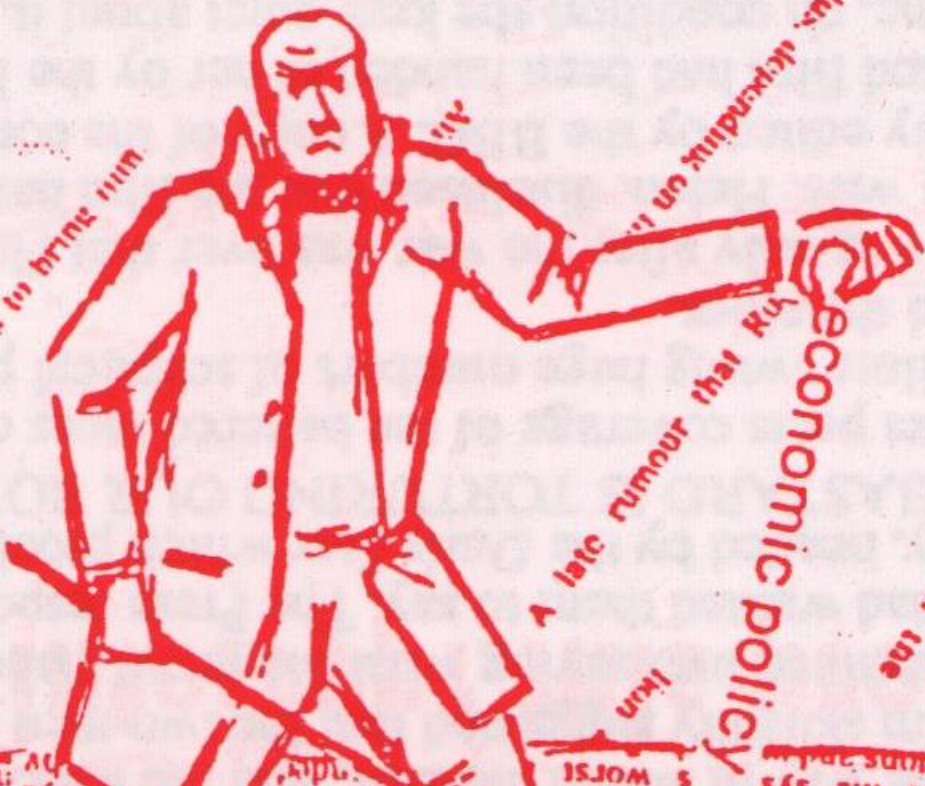
**We interrupt this program...**

meaning  
We apologise for the loss of sound.  
Please do not adjust your set.  
life.





SO MUCH TRIVIA TO WADE THROUGH, SO MUCH THAT'S IMPORTANT IS TRIVIALISED. SO MUCH MEANINGLESS "ENTERTAINMENT" AND OFFENSIVE COMMENT ABOUT WHAT IS "NORMAL" AND GOOD AND WHO IS DEVIANT AND BAD.



Economic policy

A late rumour that...

Huddock will receive...

with Mirnor

THE "REAL NEWS" IS ALL ABOUT POLITICIANS, POWER BROKERS AND WORLD MOVERS - SHARKS IN A SEA OF SHIT.

THE TOKEN SAD STUFF IS ABOUT THE POWERLESS, THE LOSERS, AND THE SAD INEVITABILITY OF THEIR TRAGIC FATE, SWEEP AWAY BY THE BLAMELESS TIDES OF DESTINY.



THE "REAL NEWS" IS ALL ABOUT POLITICIANS, POWER BROKERS AND WORLD MOVERS - SHARKS IN A SEA OF SHIT.

From "TOTALLY NORMAL" 40 BM CRL LONDON WGT 3XX.

Mad about girls

Forty bids to run the 15... A small hotel in Napier, New Zealand, is offering patrons the chance to do a Venero suit...

NO WONDER SOME PEOPLE ARE SO DESPERATE FOR A POINT OF REFERENCE

...by its content. How in 10 years ago would have been considered explicit in pop...

THAT THEY CHAIN THEMSELVES TO HEAVY ROCKS, DRAGGING OTHERS UNDER.

...the body to the hospital... several times the cure... identified the body but their...

OR, WANTING TO INFLUENCE EVENTS, THEY WILLINGLY FEED THEMSELVES TO THE SHARKS.

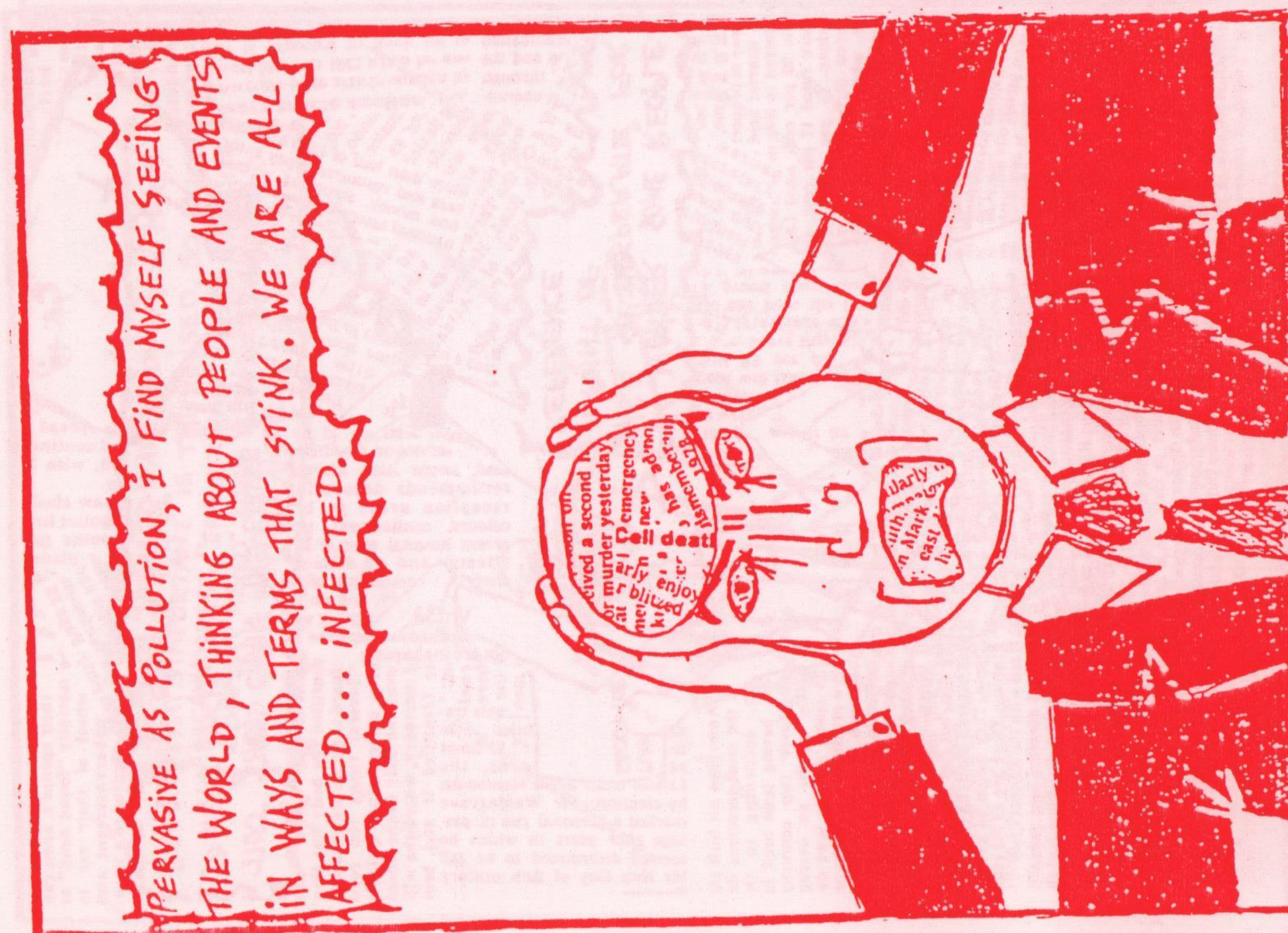
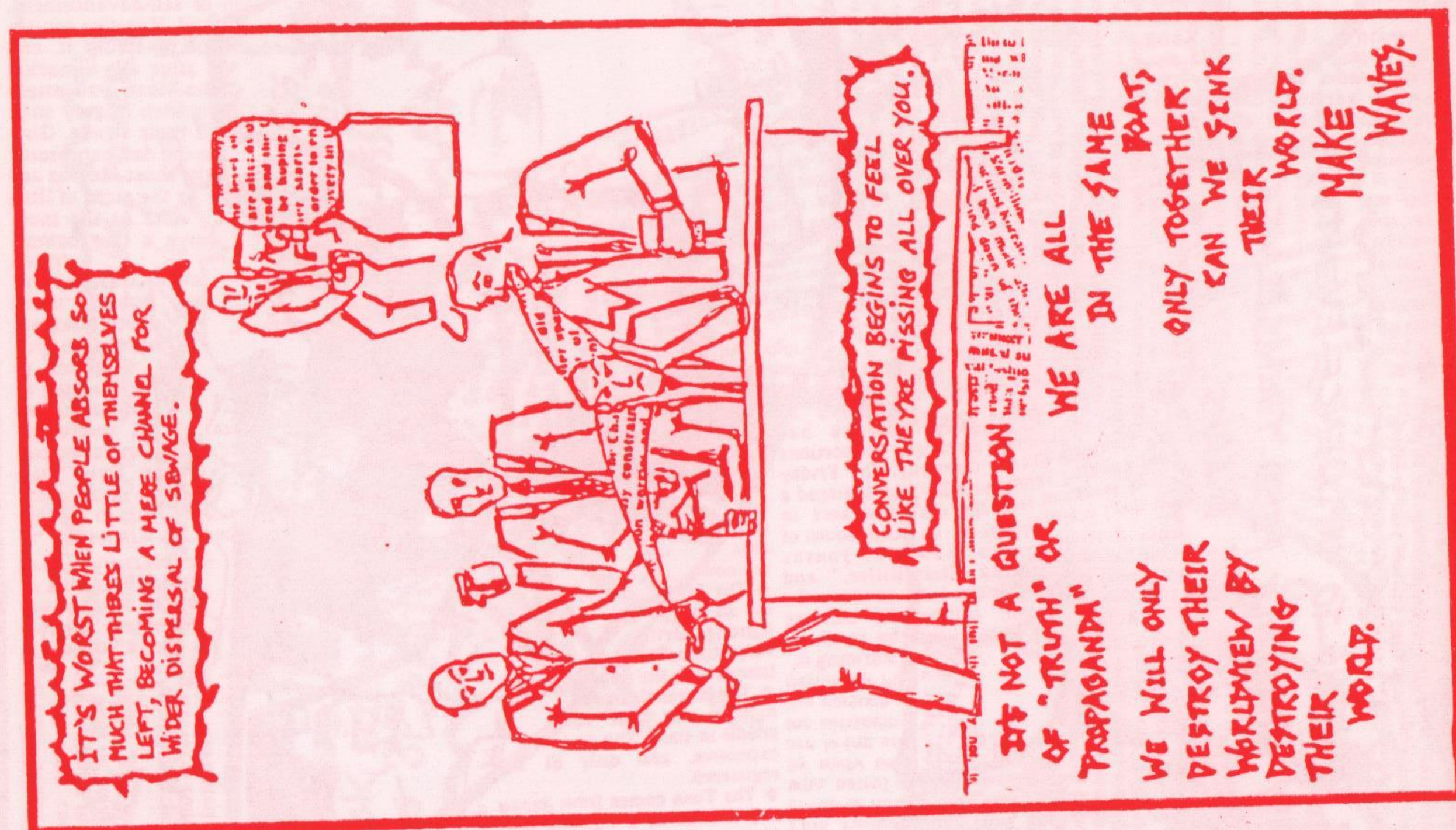
...the body to the hospital... several times the cure... identified the body but their...

The Commission for Crime in London rose by 11 per cent over the last year bringing...

...the body to the hospital... several times the cure... identified the body but their...







Hi. We are Anti-Media. We are a very small group. We are a very small group for only one reason. Because we are Anti-Media.

We all know about the war because of the media. The world at war can be confusing, beyond our control—oil spills, chemical weapons, human rights, shaky allies, teddy bear generals and *nouveau* Hitlers. There is new news every hour. The media is our only source of information. With no personal knowledge to judge against, anything can be true, anything can be false. We don't know. I don't know. Do you?

As an unknowing mass attuned to a single source we are clay in the hands of power. The manipulation is both emotional and informational. "Our troops" fly "our planes" dropping "our bombs" until "our leaders" declare victory "ours." This cheap psychology of power dovetails nicely with the humiliations of daily existence. Being powerless in society we seek to identify with power on a larger scale. They are obviously not your bombs or my generals, but by internalizing a perspective that is not ours the media rationalizes power. To turn on the media is to rationalize the war. To turn on the media yesterday or tomorrow is to rationalize clearcuts, 100% increases in prison populations, buy-an-identity lifestyles, and all the other interrelated absurdities of modern life. By speaking directly into our heads and pulling our emotions into hierarchies of real world power, media has much greater power of social control than old fashioned methods. Once the message has been internalized we police ourselves.

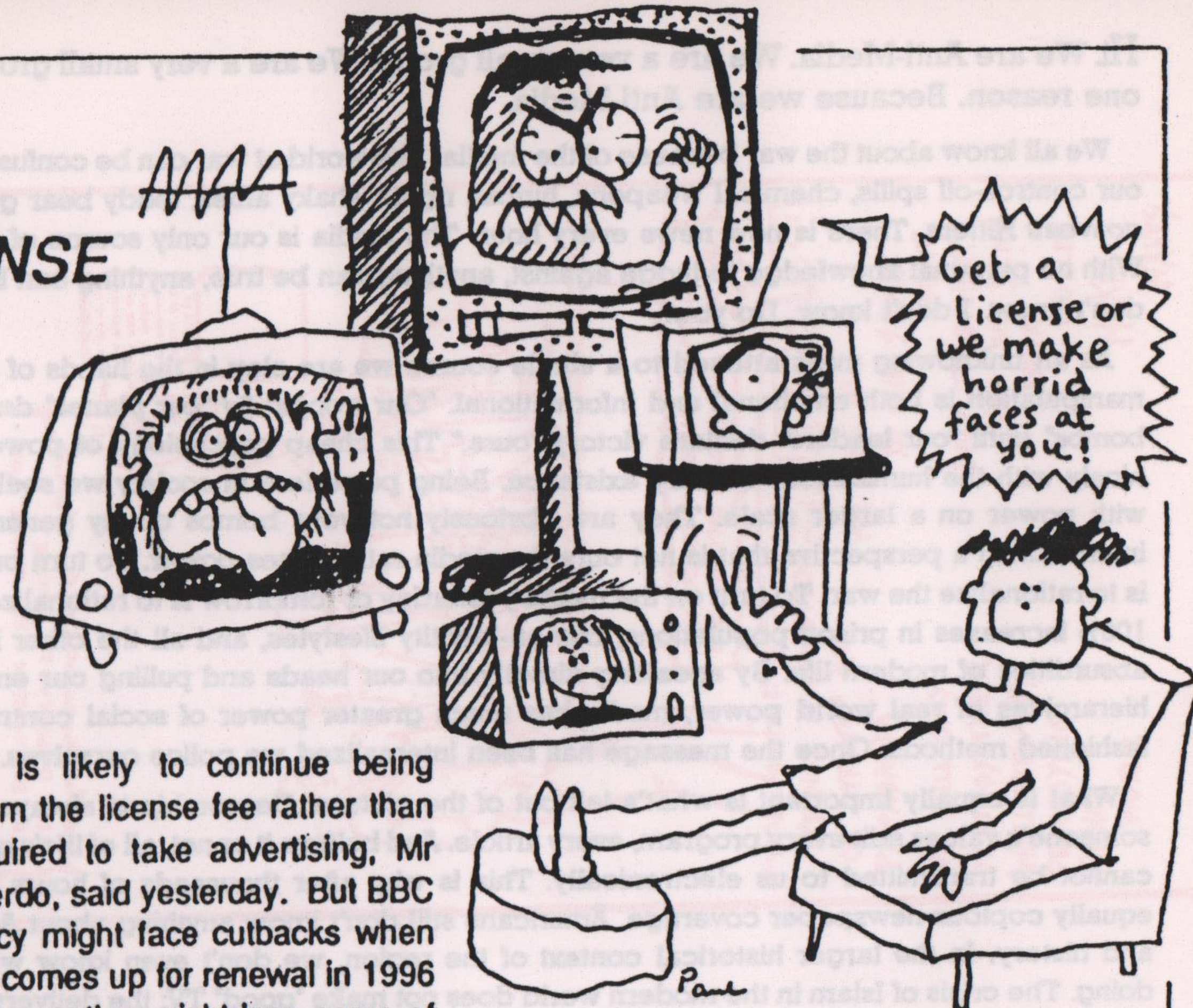
What is equally important is what's left out of the picture. Censorship is always employed, someone's values edit every program, every article. And believe it or not, all of life's experiences cannot be transmitted to us electronically. This is why after thousands of hours of TV, and equally copious newspaper coverage, Americans still don't know anything about Arab culture and history. In the larger historical context of the region, we don't even know what we are doing. The crisis of Islam in the modern world does not make "good" TV; the delivery of a video bomb does. Even if the media spent hours analyzing Mid-East history and culture the likely result would be boredom. Because Mid-East history and culture are boring? Anything but! Why then? Because boredom is what the media delivers best. No matter what brand of information you choose to consume you will never be a participant. The social basis of media is the passivity of the consumer. By simplifying complex social issues the media creates its own reality. As long as media's reality is consumed by a passive public it need not correspond to the real world.

The Economy is the Media is the War is the Economy is the Media is War. All of the above share in one big lie. That unlimited economic growth is possible forever. That this is the only choice we have. America with 5% of the world's people accounts for 63% of global energy consumption, owns 33% of the world's cars and drives 50% of the world's total mileage. The media is sponsored by those who profit from our excess. The spread of media everywhere has reproduced everywhere the same consumption patterns and lifestyles that make useless economic growth possible. The media creates the need to need. The need to need is what fuels the industrial destruction of the planet.

What can we hope for, living as we are, in a thoroughly mediated society? One sign of hope, perhaps already widespread is massive disbelief, sensory cynicism. This double negative is not always a positive. The lies must first be created and broadcast to be judged as lies. Thus they are already real. Real and ever-present. The most hopeful sign and best solution is to turn it all off. A world without media? Unmediated activity is the birth of our power. When thousands march against the war it is an expression of desire. A collective desire to change the world we live in is a basic human reality, but not a part of the media's world. When thousands of people become innovators, instigators, and originators, then somehow even the most exciting media seems lifeless in comparison. Do you share our desire to watch the currently programmed reality of corporate culture and war fade away like the ever smaller dot at the center of the screen? Perhaps you, too, are Anti-Media.



# NO LICENSE



The BBC is likely to continue being funded from the license fee rather than being required to take advertising, Mr mellor, wierdo, said yesterday. But BBC bureaucracy might face cutbacks when its charter comes up for renewal in 1996 and the corporation might lose some of its current radio or television channels.

A poll in the observer newspaper showed that a majority of people wanted the BBC to be funded by advertising. However we at ARMCHAIR would like the BBC to continue with the TV license system as it is such a joke and one of the easiest bills to refuse!

Because things like social pressure and Rolf Harris's cartoon time force most of us to have a TV, and only a small minority survive under the commodity spectacle without a telly, a TV license is in fact a form of petty poll tax for a large chunk of the population. As a piece of capitalist austerity it amounts to a massive scandalous attack on our incomes of about £1.50 per week!!! (if you're paying that is).

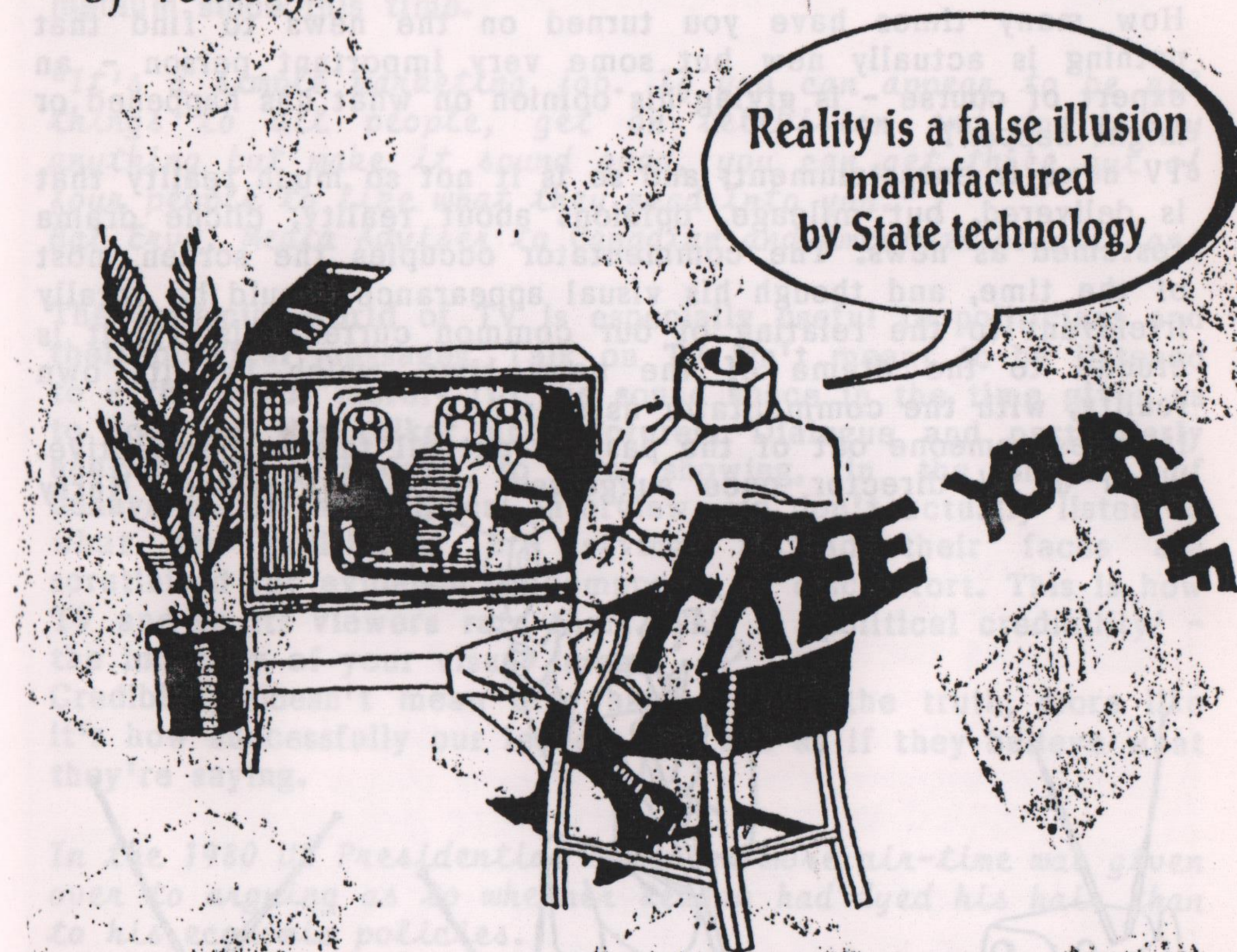
If you don't have a TV you aren't supposed to have a license. But if you have a TV and you don't watch a

second of BBC you are supposed to have a license! It makes sense eh? But then even if you do watch BBC why should you have to pay for hour after hour of mindnumbing garbage and capitalist propaganda?

As long as you remember that, if they knock on your door, you don't have to answer any of their questions, and in fact you don't even have to open the door! you are basically safe. They must prove; 1. That your house has no license 2. That there is a telly in the house and 3. That you are the owner. They have no right of entry unless they go away and get a warrant (by which time you've sold the telly). You only get caught if you grass yourself up.

They bluff "If you don't pay others pay more", but if the BBC didn't exist it wouldn't need funding.

The System is sustained not simply by the images. it peddles, but by us when we reproduce these images in our daily life — which in turn are reported by the media as examples of 'reality'.





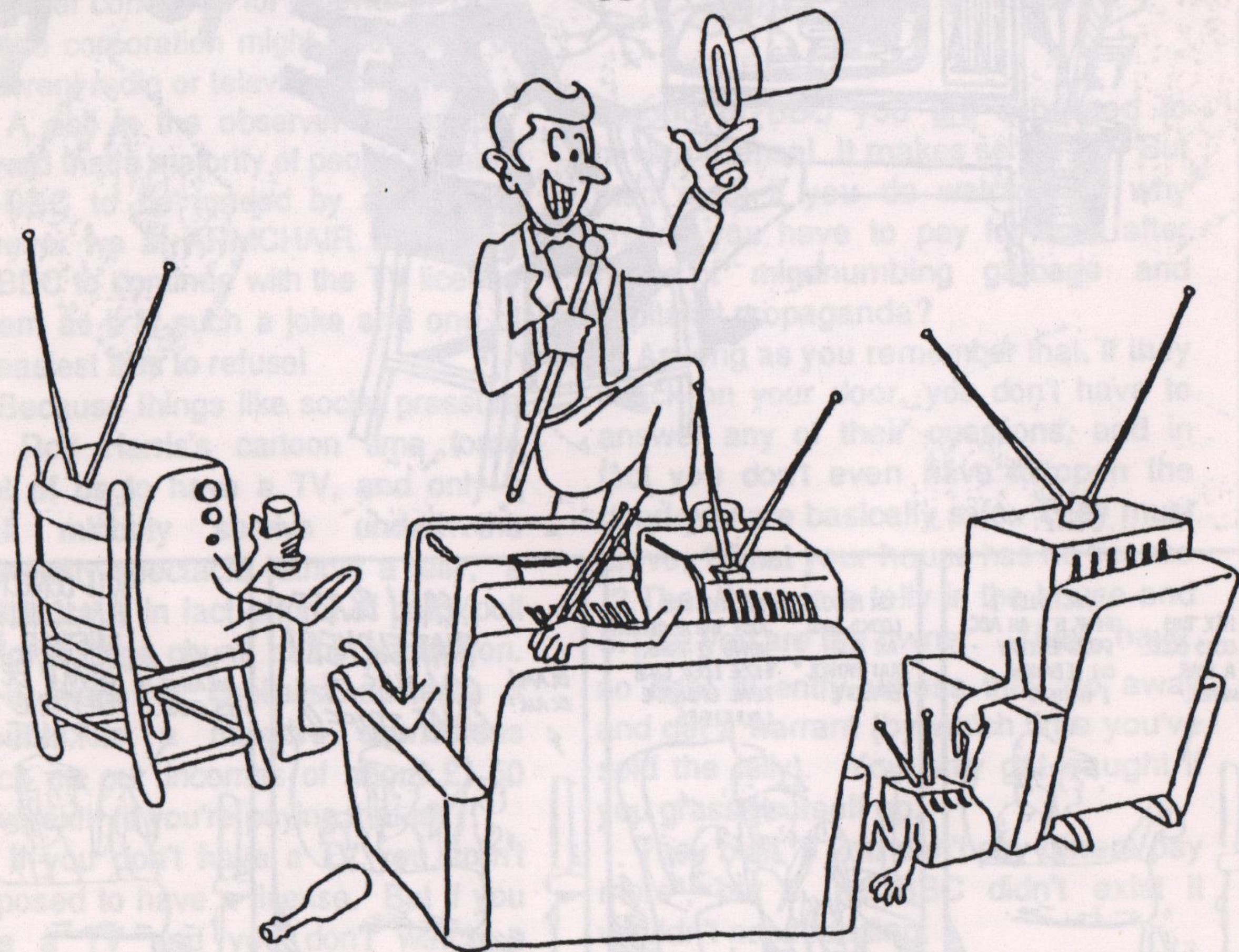
# FRIDAY

## STOP MAKING NONSENSE

How many times have you turned on the news to find that nothing is actually new but some very important person - an expert of course - is giving his opinion on what has happened or might happen?

TV news is entertainment; and so is it not so much reality that is delivered, but mileage, opinions about reality, cliché drama costumed as news. The commentator occupies the screen most of the time, and though his visual appearance should be totally irrelevant to the relating of our common current history, it is crucial to the drama of the news hour, which has its own reality, with the commentator as star.

It takes someone out of the past to put all this in perspective. When a TV director once suggested to U.S. President Harry



Truman that his tie was inappropriate for TV, Truman stared pityingly for about ten seconds. "Does it really matter?" he asked. "Because if while I'm talking about Korea, people are asking each other about my necktie, it seems to me we're in a great deal of trouble."

American kings and kingmakers have wised up to the TV medium since this time.

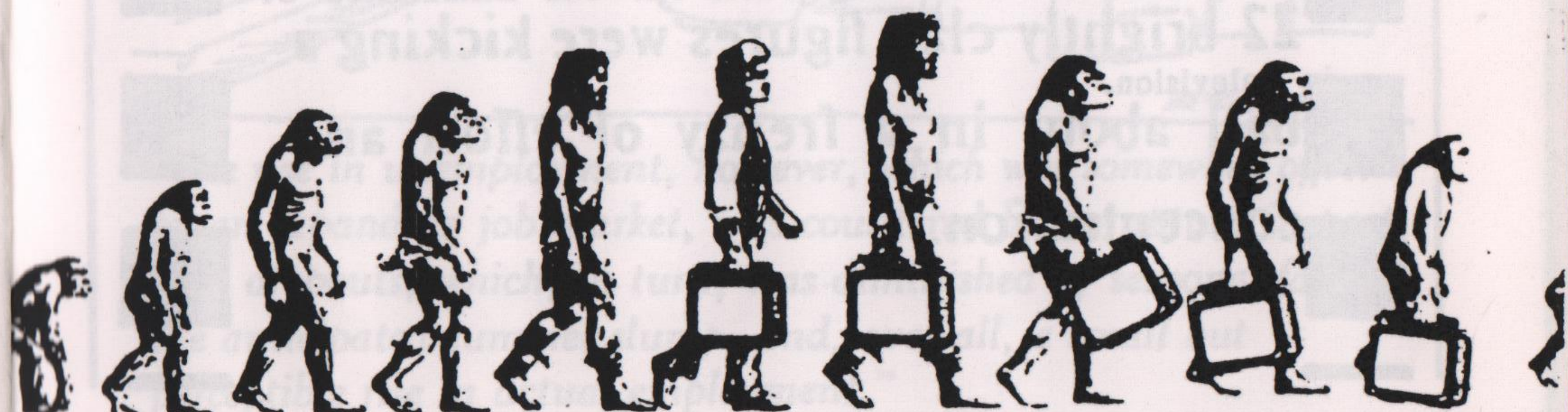
*"It's a simple marketing job. If you can appear to be all things to all people, get on television and don't say anything but make it sound good, you can get three out of four people to like what they read into you."*

*Hal Ervy, Media Adviser to Canadian and American politicians*

The artificial world of TV is especially useful to politicians and their political messages. Talk on TV isn't meant to be listened to - the words merely fill the sound space in the time given us to look at the talker and pictures. Dialogue and particularly analysis is secondary to the showing, in the theatre of behaviour. In the political interview, we don't actually listen to what the politicians are saying; instead their faces are scrutinized for evidence of composure or discomfort. This is how TV and so its viewers rate them. This is 'political credibility' - the integrity of your visual image.

Credibility doesn't mean they have to tell the truth, more like it's how successfully our leaders can act as if they believe what they're saying.

*In the 1980 US Presidential campaign more air-time was given over to arguing as to whether Reagan had dyed his hair than to his economic policies.*



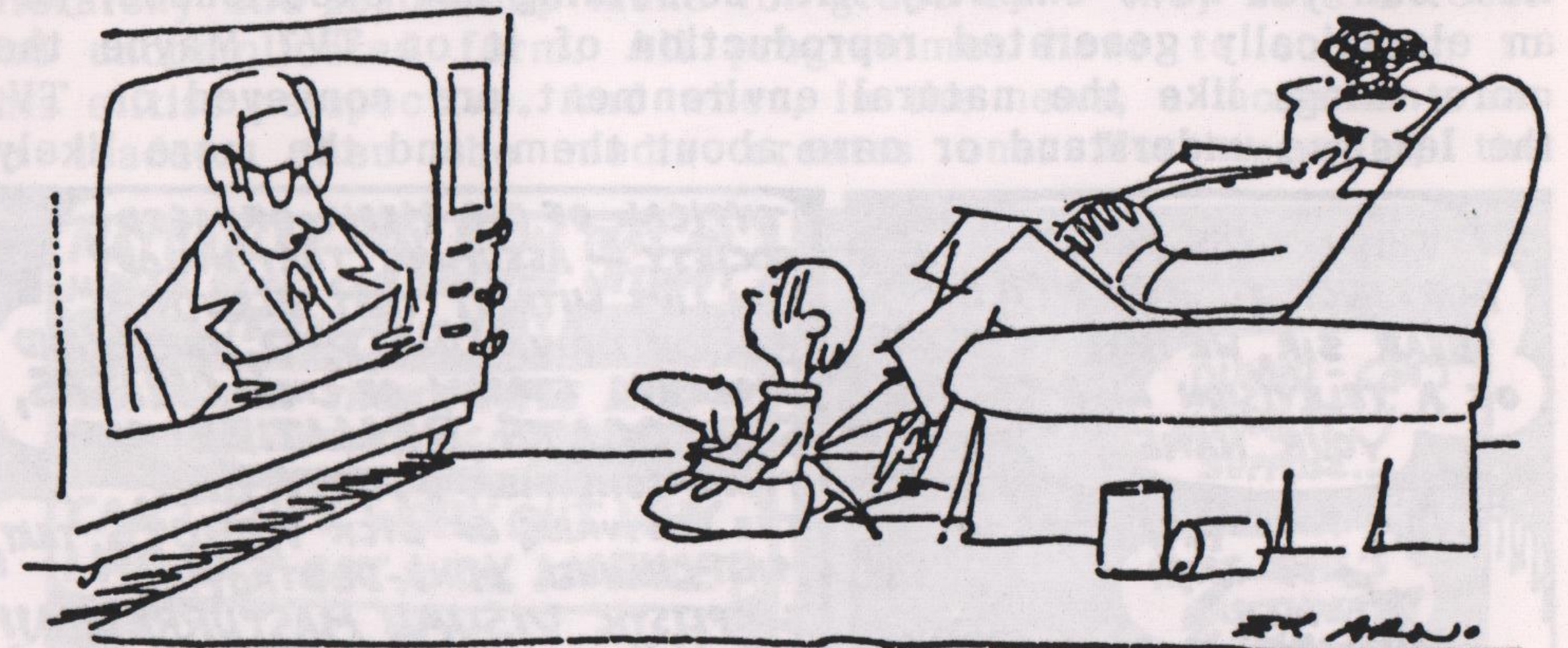


**O**f all the events in human history, the one to attract the largest audience was not a sports programme was a significantly different experience from a police thriller or news of an African war, all 80 million viewers were sitting separately in dark rooms engaged in exactly the same activity at the same time... **a special celebration of some complex achievement in the arts or sciences, but a simple ball-game - a soccer match. On a June day in 1978, it** watched the bicycle act believed their experience was **is claimed that more than 1,000 million people tuned in to the World Cup Final between Argentina and Holland.** as we all watched from our separate living rooms, it was **This means that something like one-quarter of the entire world population stopped whatever they were doing and** Everybody was engaged in the same act at the same **focused their attention on a small** time, but we were doing it alone." **patch of grass in South America where** Jerry Mander - Four Arguments For The Elimination Of **22 brightly clad figures were kicking a** Television. **ball about in a frenzy of effort and** **concentration.**

## SATURDAY

### A LITTLE LEARNING IS A DANGEROUS THING

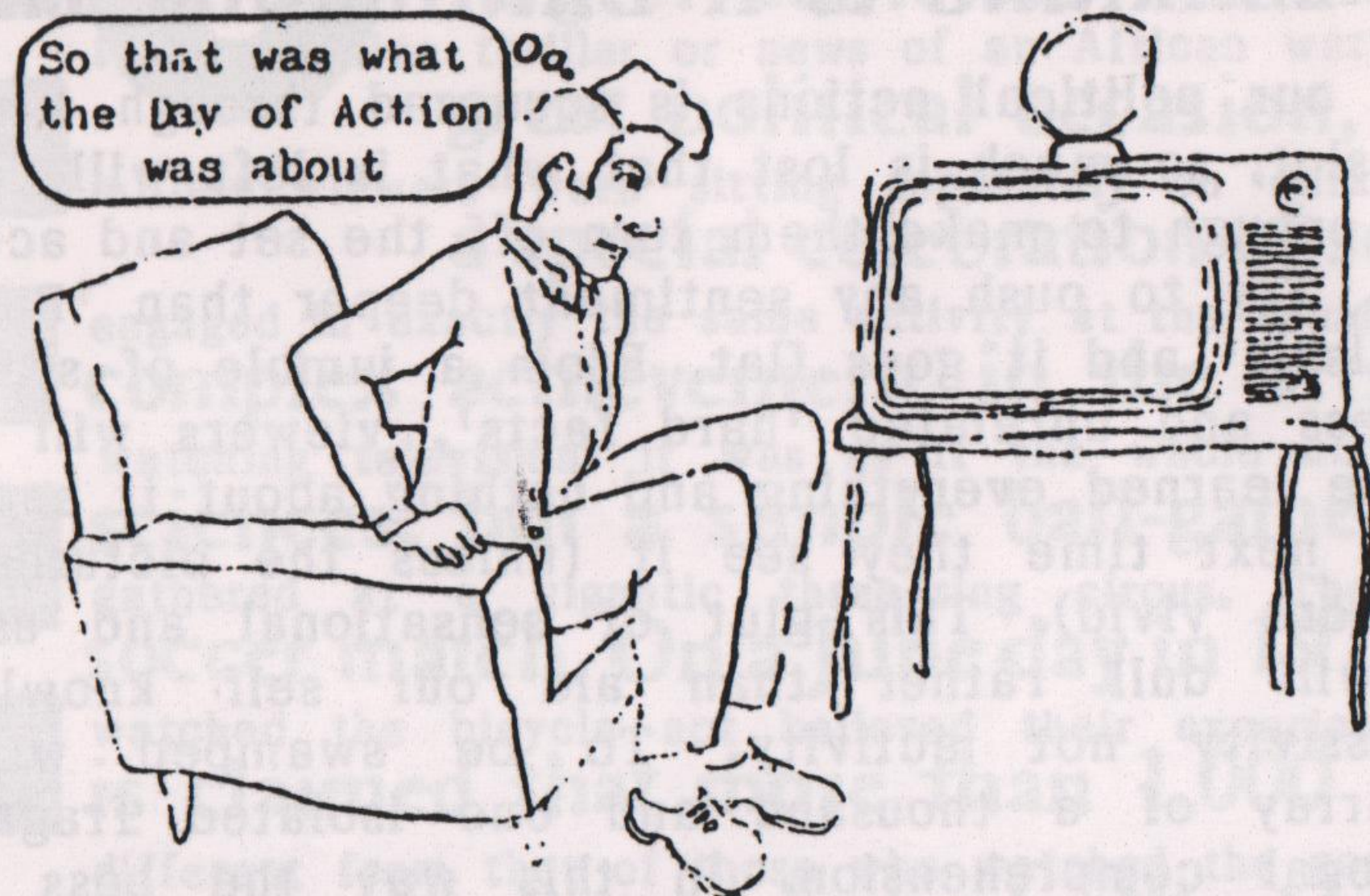
When one of our political actions is squeezed through a thirty second news slot, so much is lost that what is left will fail to move anyone enough to make them turn off the set and actually do something. Try to push any sentiment deeper than 'Buy My Brand Of Bullshit' and it goes flat. From a jumble of startling but meaningless and unrelated 'hard facts', viewers will know that they have learned everything and nothing about it and will be bored the next time they see it (unless the pictures are newer and more vivid). This glut of sensational and useless information will dull rather than aid our self knowledge, producing passivity not activity. To be swamped with a spectacular array of a thousand and one isolated fragments prevents rational comprehension. In this way the boss class makes politics remote from the people, to persuade us of our incapacity to organize our own affairs. It attempts to prevent understanding of the world so creating the need for intermediaries - industrial correspondents, special economic analysts



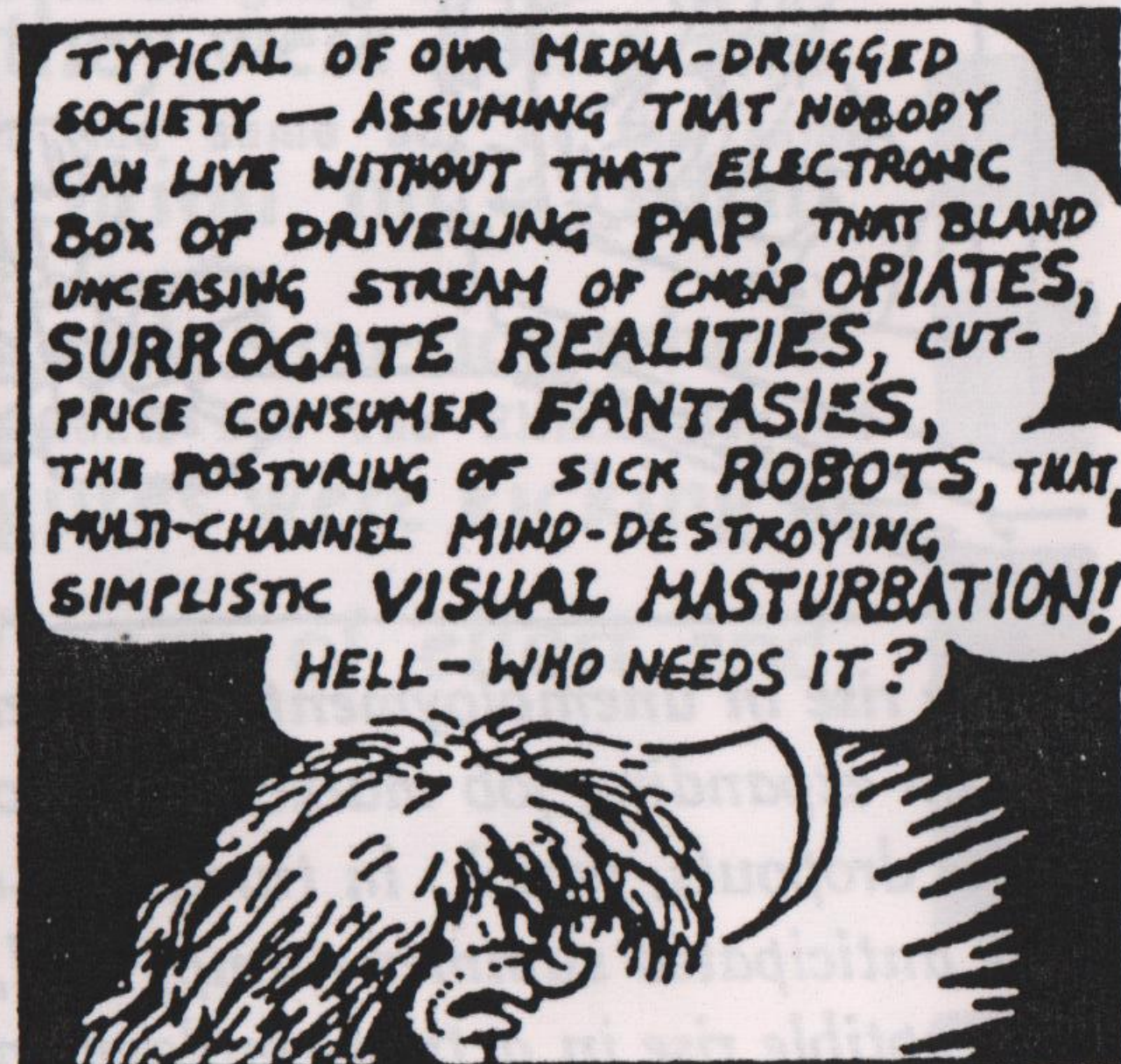
"The rise in unemployment, however, which was somewhat offset by an expanding job market, was countered by an upturn in part-time dropouts, which, in turn, was diminished by seasonal factors, the anticipated summer slump; and, over-all, a small but perceptible rise in actual employment."



and their like. Politics is made into an elite culture, the privileged possession of 'specialists' and certified intellectuals. You tell me that TV brings subjects like destruction of the natural environment, famine and massacre to the viewers attention. Certain it can, but what do the viewers do about it

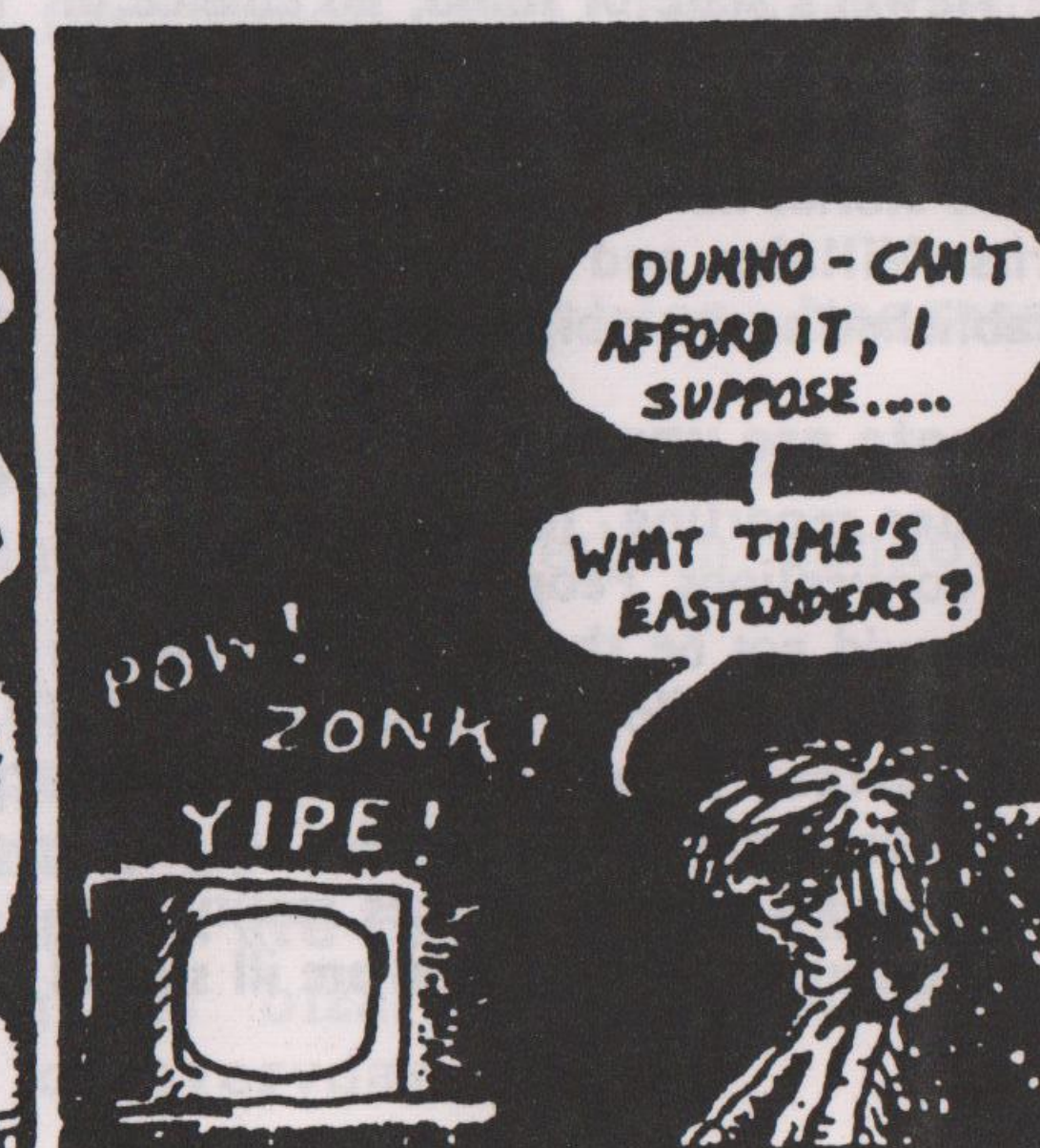
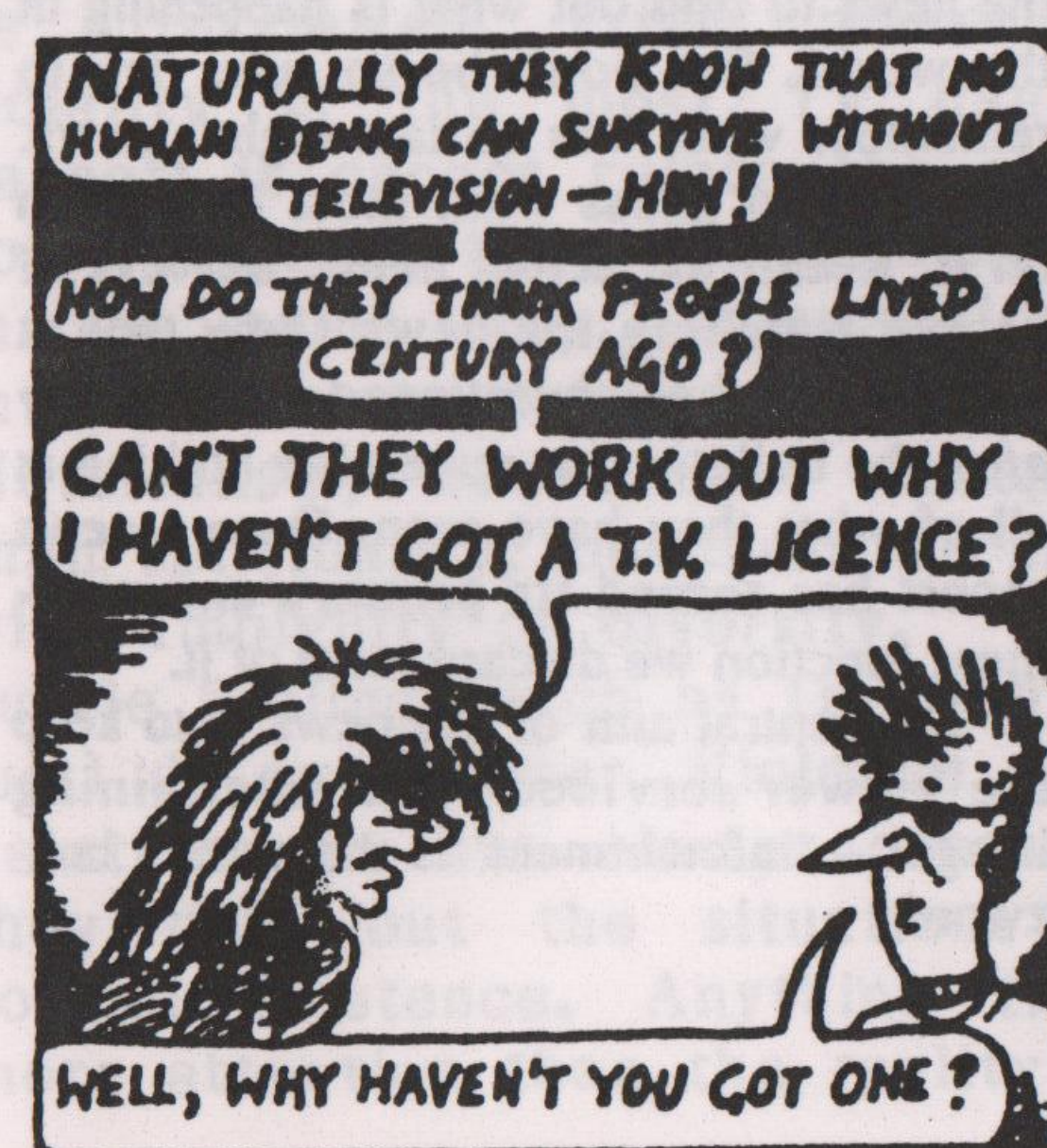


after the show? What would you do if this shit was going down in your High Street? What is happening in your High Street? We can always buy food in our shops, so why are people starving? When we have drought here, why doesn't everyone starve? How can you have empathy with something not experienced, just an electrically generated reproduction of it on TV? Maybe the more things like the natural environment are conveyed on TV, the less we understand or care about them, and the more likely



their destruction becomes. The totality, the far ranging causes of famine, will always be omitted for it is complex and less visual; it runs the risk of being 'boring'. Famine is no longer in the news because the pictures and the stories are no longer unique. This is the reason for TV's fixation with celebrities such as Bob Geldof - TV could follow his exploits and adventures whereas starving people are static, they just sit there and die, and that after a while ceases to be 'entertainment'. With over-exposure, viewers soon become immune (even to their own conscience).

Hierarchy and leadership make for great TV - they have a focus and uncomplicated form. All programmes have to conform to this elitist perspective. And when, in the news, a movement has no leaders, then the media creates one. For example, the





# Infotainment

**A** DISASTER is only a disaster if it appears on TV,' said a Red Cross official in Geneva recently - lamenting that the much-televised refugee Kurds seemed to merit a Wembley concert, though the African famine might have had a more pressing need for funds. After four decades of TV news reporting we are no closer to accepting that it is founded on a fiction. This is the myth of information: the idea that there is, outside our consciousness, a collection of facts floating around which diligent newspeople gather and sift on our behalf.

A fact is something which is made - as in a factory. It doesn't arise spontaneously and have an independent existence. Facts are things which humans make to describe the world around them.

TV news telling is crude. The tales have to be simplified and stylized because of the limitations of the medium. For one thing, communication is entirely one-way and inflexible. Reporters can only guess at the viewer's state of mind; no chance of changing tack in mid-sentence if they detect a lack of comprehension or interest. So the stories have to follow accepted patterns. Villains and victims have to be established as unambiguously as possible.

## Sunsets are unsuitable

Disaster reporting, for example, has its own conventions. People who are in trouble should not be shown smiling, though they may well do so out of politeness. And curious neighbourhood children should certainly not be allowed to grin at the camera since this makes reality look very confusing. People who are ill should

look ill on the screen. Their families should preferably be weeping. It doesn't matter if there is a beautiful sunset. Cut!

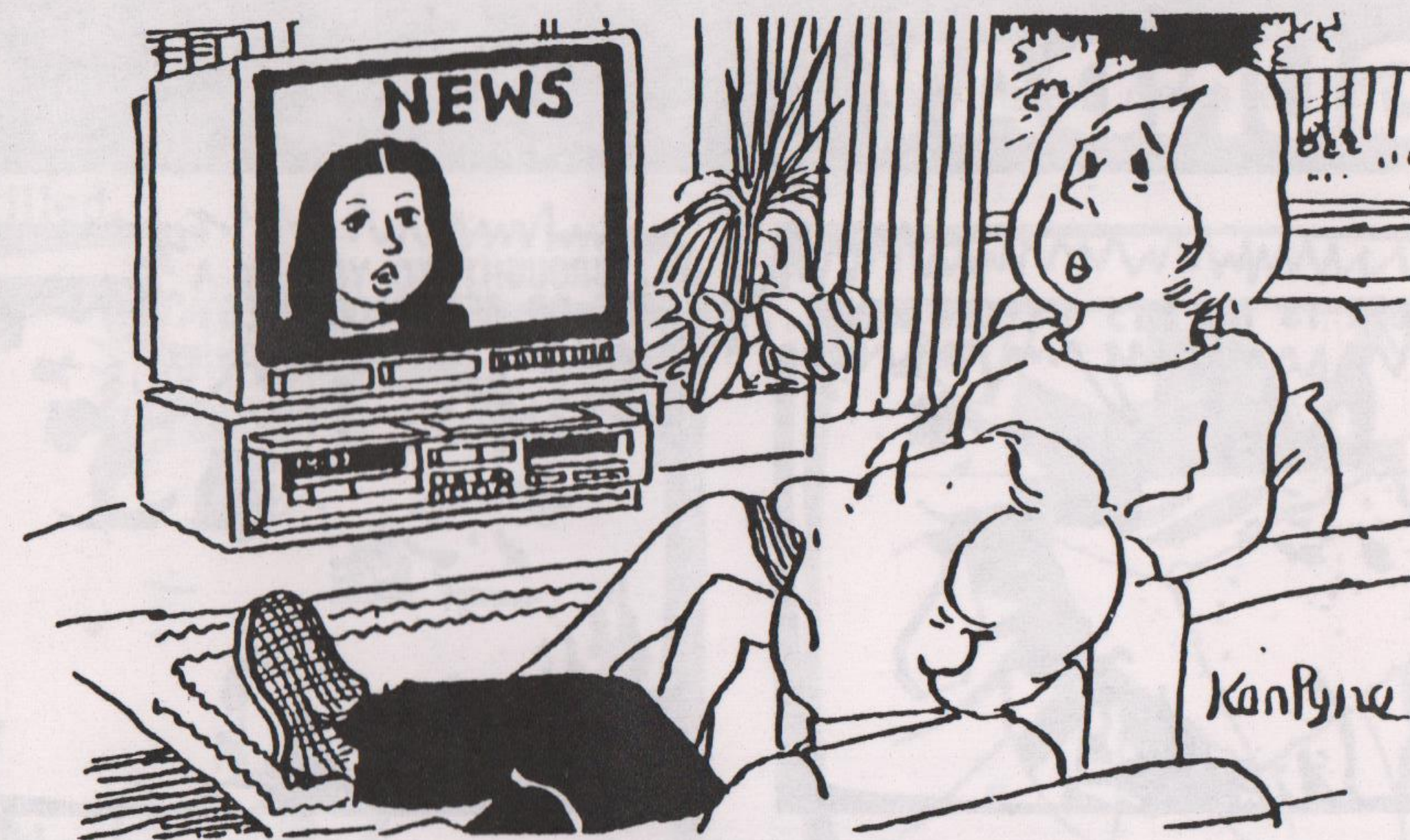
While one channel reports on the Bangladesh cyclone others might be showing a man beating his wife in *LA Law*, or a soccer report showing a nasty foul, or even Lady Macbeth wandering around with a bloody dagger. And with a zapper at your fingertips you can idly hop from one to another and come away with much the same mixture of shock and boredom from each.

## A world of its own

This flattening process is a peculiar characteristic of television. You'd be rather disturbed in real life if such things popped up in front of you in quick succession, but on TV this is normal; it is expected. TV may seem to offer a window on reality but it is actually a world of its own.

You may well protest that you watch the news to find out what is happening in the world. But don't be so sure. Try to remember what was on last night's news. Don't try to guess what must have been on it. Recall the actual items. Surveys of people watching the news show that at least half of those questioned *immediately* after the bulletin can remember nothing at all of what they have seen. Once a news report has served its primary entertainment function we discard most of it.

The central aim of the news is to keep the viewer serviced with entertaining images - 'infotainment' is the current buzzword.



*'...with subtitles for those unable to believe their ears.'*

Miners' Strike was personalized into Scargill's Strike.

*"Everything becomes clear, there is not too much to think about, it is a dispute about personalities, not issues or causes, or sides or classes. An individual popularity poll with the media working the social clapometer."*

*Dave Douglas - Tell Us Lies About The Miners*

Political movements with a single charismatic leader are more suitable and efficient for television - only the leaders need to be interviewed. Trivia makes for 'good TV' because superficiality is the most TV can process and deliver. Depth it cannot; it cannot relate the aspirations of 140,000 mineworkers, so it pretends they don't exist.

In the same way, competition is good television because it involves drama, winning, wanting and loss.

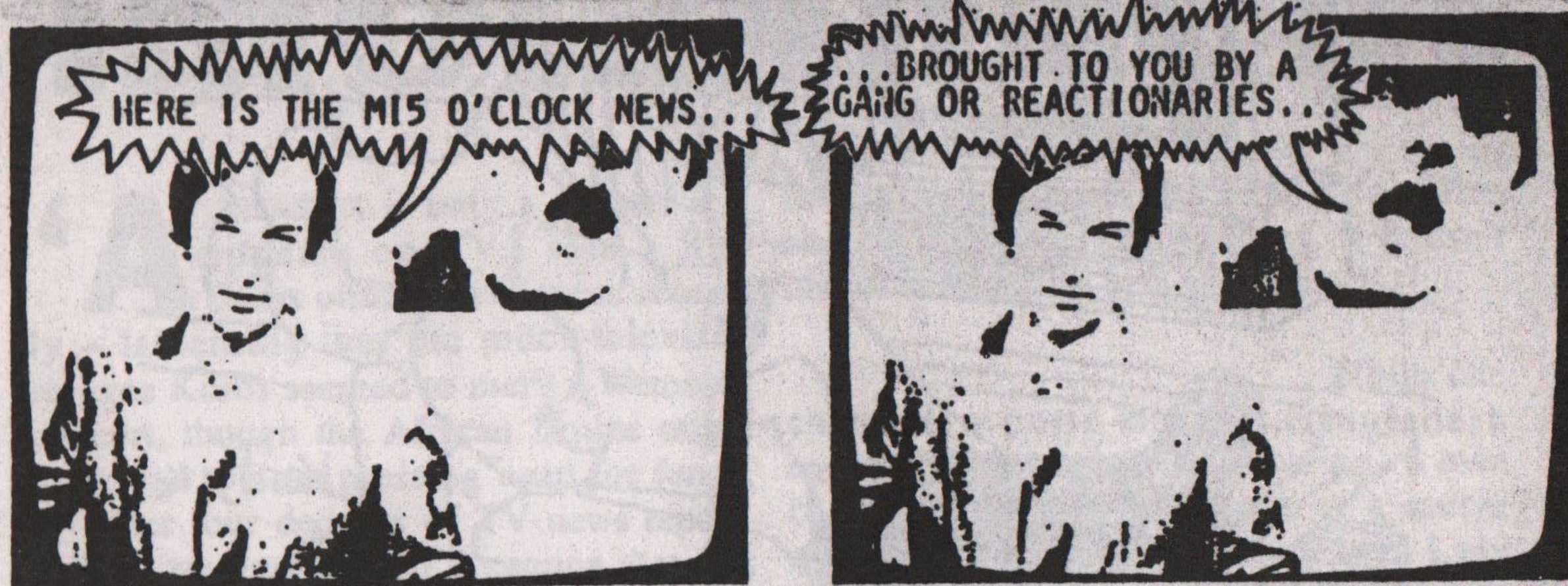
Materialism, acquisition, deception and ambition work better than spirituality, openness or sincerity. The medium cannot deal with ambiguity or diversity.

Subtle feelings such as friendship or love (as opposed to sex and lust) do not deliver. Violence does.

Relationships are always presented as in crisis (*East Enders*); they pick out the situations that are **not** representative of normal existence. Anything that is bizarre or different gets more attention than the reality of everyday life.



# SUNDAY



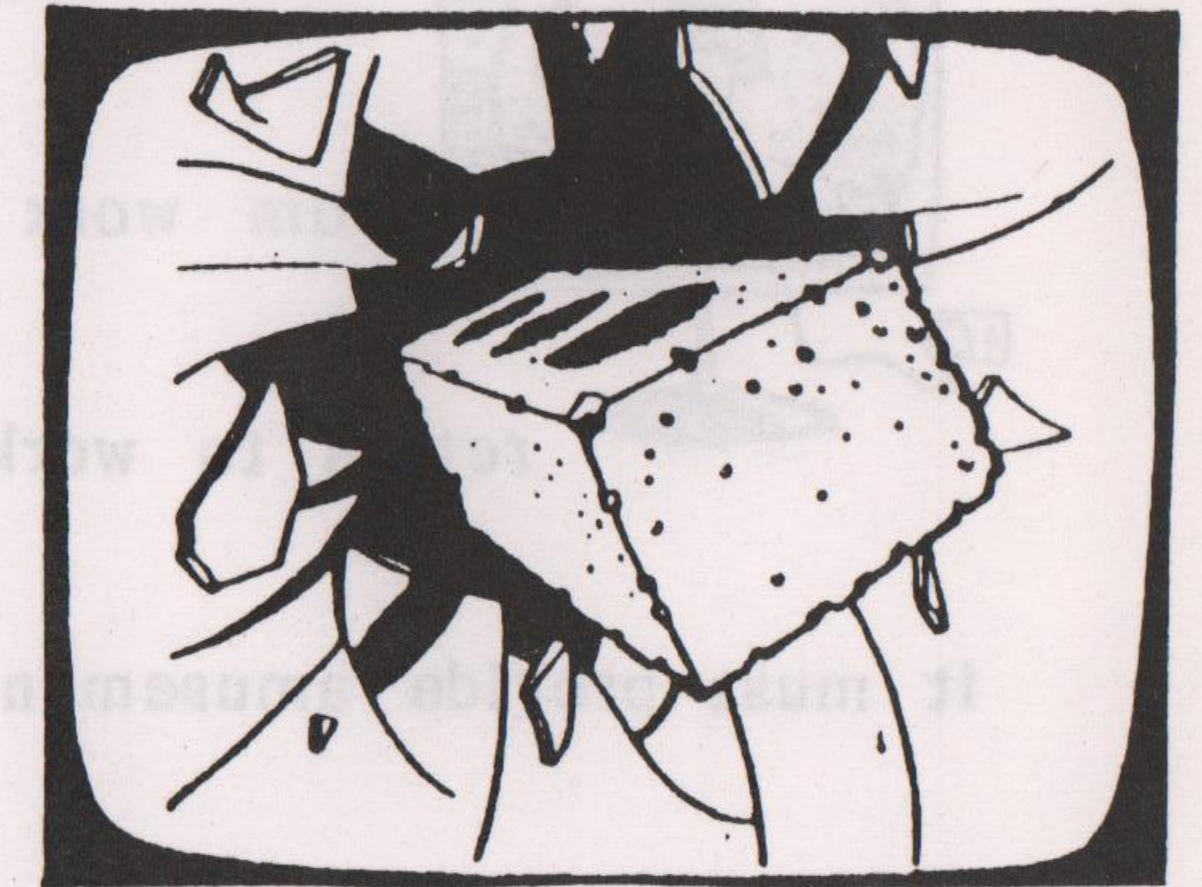
A newsreader's perspective on issues is based on a system of reference points that are assumed already given and generally accepted. For example:

"The latest wave of industrial unrest is likely to undermine business confidence."

You would never get a TV discussion of trade union confidence; this statement immediately identifies trade unions with disruption of what is the important activity of industry, the making of profit for the bosses. Even when claiming, like Channel Four, to be putting an impartial view or putting 'both sides of the story', there is still the persistent definition of what the issues of the day actually are. The overload of coverage of the Gulf War carved the impression of a matter of earth-shaking proportions. Even if you didn't accept the official version you were still made to feel that what was occurring had significance beyond and far greater than your normal day's events. Because almost all of us still went to work at dull jobs, attended meaningless classes, stood in the dole queue, shopped at the supermarket or watched TV - and no phoney issue can change that reality.

The media fixes the limits to all possible thought: supporters of the official ideology at one end, and the critics, the loyal opposition, at the other. All share certain tacit assumptions, and it is these assumptions that are crucial. Setting boundaries on a 'two-sided' debate makes the propaganda system more effective than imposing one rigid doctrine from which no dissent is

possible. In fact, the more vigorous the false debate, the more effectively the basic rules and regulations of domination are instilled.



Television is an agency of the established order and so serves to maintain, rather than question conventional belief and behaviour. It is THE medium for the socialisation of people into standardized roles and behaviour.

Its function is social control.

Liberation comes when we no longer want or need someone to tell us what kind of day it was.







"Leisure-time activity must provide relief

from work monotony without making the

return to work

it must provide amusement

and pleasure without disturbance...Mass

culture is thus oriented towards a central



too unbearable;

without insight



aspect of industrial society: the

depersonalization of the individual."

Irving Howe

Notes On Mass Culture

