

Kennan wrote to *The New York Times*:

... if American policy from here on out ... is to be controlled by popular emotional impulses, and particularly ones provoked by the commercial television industry, then there is no place—not only for myself; but what have traditionally been regarded as the responsible deliberative organs of our government, in both executive and legislative branches.

His *cri du coeur* was echoed more mildly by Barbara McDougall<sup>2</sup> when she left External Affairs last June and told *Maclean's*:

Public opinion tends to respond to what the public sees and hears on its television set. That can be very dangerous, or it can be very helpful. The world, to some extent, was driven into Somalia because of the media coverage. At the same time, starvation in the Sudan has been virtually ignored. The question is a simple but frightening one: when the cameras move on, does that mean that foreign policy moves on?

It was put more dramatically the other day by [U.S.] Secretary of State Warren Christopher:

Television is a wonderful phenomenon and sometimes even an instrument of freedom. But television images cannot be the North Star of American foreign policy.

By which time George Kennan had weighed in again:

Fleeting, disjointed, visual glimpses of reality, flickering on and off the screen, here today and gone tomorrow, are not the "information" on which sound judgments on complicated international problems are to be formed.

Kennan, McDougall and Christopher all seem to suggest that television is usurping the function of responsible people in government to set the agenda in international relations and to define the national interest.

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2. Former Secretary of State for External Affairs.