

Prime Minister
Gro Harlem Brundtland

DINNER SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE EUROPEAN BROADCASTING
UNION'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN OSLO, 4 JULY 1992.

It is a privilege to welcome you all to Oslo and to Norway. The Government is truly honoured to have the delegates to the 43rd General Assembly of the European Broadcasting Union, as well as observers and representatives of cooperating networks, as our guests tonight.

Broadcasting has a very important role to play in the period of rapid global change and development we are currently experiencing. Here in Europe, there have been fundamental changes as dictatorships are replaced by democracy in what we used to call "the East". The information revolution and technological change have had a decisive influence on the content and speed of this process.

Information is vital in our complex societies, and technological progress has now put broadcasting in a position to meet our needs for rapid, independent information.

But we need more than hard news. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent there is a growing need to develop multicultural understanding. The exchange of radio and television programmes is an important contribution to achieve this aim.

A growing understanding of one another's culture and way of life is vital to peaceful development in the world. Radio and television bring us closer to one another. We are heading towards the global village which Marshall MacLuhan described some decades ago.

However, we must also be aware of the seductive influence of the media. We can now receive fragmented images from all over the world, 24 hours a day. It has been said that there is no page two in television. Complexity may be reduced to disconnected simplicity.

I believe a cartoon in the New Yorker showed a newsreader saying: "These were the headlines. We will be back in a moment to blow them out of proportion".

Pan-European change have more than ever been on everybody's minds, desks and screens the past few years. Through broadcasting media, we have all been present at cutting events and we have all instantly felt history being made. Images many people thought they would never see have been brought home to us, such as the first Trabant cars driving through a hole in the Berlin Wall, soaked in sparkling wine, or the strange assembly of coup-makers in Moscow and Yeltsin on top of a

tank, not behind one as many previous Soviet leaders.

Now, I have been informed that the EBU has decided to merge with its counterpart in Eastern Europe, the OIRT, and that these plans may take effect next year. This is good news and a solid step in the direction of further pan-European integration. For what is Europe if not a cultural concept and a sense of unity, and what is more natural for us all to belong to the same cultural organization?

The position of European film and television production has been weakened by stiff competition from foreign films and TV series. There is a growing concern about this trend, which is reflected in the steps taken by the European Parliament and the Council of Europe to adopt conventions and charters to strengthen audiovisual production in Europe.

These decisions will help to safeguard the cultural identity of Europe. We must build on what we have in common as well as the individual characteristics of our countries and regions. In the light of this I welcome your plans for a new European TV-channel, Euronews.

As you know, Lillehammer, Norway, is organizing the next Winter Olympics in 1994. We are determined to make this an exciting event and to take advantage of the opportunity to introduce the rest of the world to Norway.

When we hosted the Winter Olympics in 1952 an American journal wrote that no other nation would have made comparable efforts in peace-time. So, as some of you say, stay with us. Watch us in 1994.

Our preparations for this event are on schedule. Transmission by radio and television to hundreds of millions of viewers and listeners is of course one of the giant challenges we are facing.

We trust that the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation will serve the international community well as host broadcaster of the Games, but it can only succeed in cooperation with other broadcasting companies within the EBU. I am therefore pleased to hear that preparations for the biggest challenge ever faced by our national broadcasting corporation are going smoothly.

At the Rio Conference on environment and development people were for the first time in history able to follow their leaders from hour to hour on television. A United Nations Conference, dismissed by many cynics as the ultimate example of bureaucracy, became world news, and government leaders were made clearly accountable for their positions.

Thus, we shall rely on the gift of information technology for spreading knowledge and for developing those common perspectives and those common attitudes which our human predicament now so sorely requires. We need responsible people

- such as you - people with insight and a professional approach.

This occasion makes it appropriate to end on a culinary note. It has been said that television is a medium because it is neither rare nor well-done. With an increasing number of channels we may always choose not to take what may not be overly well done.

Finally, I would like to propose a toast to the European Broadcasting Union, to all of you attending this General Assembly and to a future marked by growing mutual understanding.