

"TELEVISION AND THE FAMILY"

Fred M. Rogers

SYMPOSIUM ON THE FAMILY - Can it be saved?

JOHNSON & JOHNSON

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In fact, I believe that those of us on television who are available to families on a regular basis must consider ourselves as part of the extended family of all those who welcome us to their homes. Whether we like it or not we're being talked about and used in the ways American families communicate. The way we television relatives solve our problems on the screen will in some respects influence the ways our viewers approach their problems, especially if our dramas have relevance to the ones they are involved with in their lives. For instance, children who are concerned about lizards and witches in their own fantasy lives will be all the more interested in our lizard and witch which Margaret Hamilton (famous for her Witch in the "Wizard of Oz") portrays for us during the week of May 11.

A person struggling with cancer or alcohol addiction or loss of a spouse is going to be naturally attracted to programs which include such themes. In fact, every member of a family will have a particular interest which television might address itself to, and we need to recognize that each member of the family might need to have the television all to himself or herself at certain times during the week--just like each person needs to be alone with himself or herself at certain times. Nonetheless, there are times when a family can share a program together; and, it's programs like this which need to be more and more carefully conceived...programs which evoke thoughts and feelings of what it's like to be: a little child or a teenager or an elderly person--programs which attempt to awaken empathy for different members of the family. Television can show and tell about the resourcefulness of the human ego and how wonderful it can be when confronted by conflict, how people grapple with real problems and make real solutions with which they then live.

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