

Network 2018

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Forty two years ago director Sidney Lumet brought to the big screen writer Paddy Chayefsky's brilliant story of Network. This great satirical film can now be looked at through the prism of our current state of Amerikan culture, or lack of same.

In the film top prime time newscaster Howard Beale has a nervous breakdown on air, but not before he gets at the truth, the *crux* of it all. Beale rants and raves about how this whole system is totally broken and corrupt, with the media leading the way... or perhaps *echoing* it. He tells the public to go to their windows, open them up and yell " I'm mad as hell and not going to take it anymore!!" When the story of the inner story of this event goes viral throughout the country, Beale is no longer looked upon as a 'Nut' but as an icon. The whores at his network realized that their faulty ratings could now be rocketed to the top. And thus, what we now call *Reality Television* was born. As with today's Reality TV, his station not only gave Beale a show of his own, to continue with both his rants and his passing out each time, but they created a myriad of far out Reality TV shows. One of them actually had a violent revolutionary group under the microscope of the television lens. That would be like having a Reality TV show today following ISIS, or maybe one of our rogue and covert CIA units planning to undermine another nation's sovereignty.

The inner secret behind the 'Why' of his network allowing, even *encouraging*, Howard Beale to continue to rile people up, was this: *The American public are and have always been suckers for the hype, and only care about being ENTERTAINED.* And so, forty two years go by and nothing changes on that account. *Bread and circuses* is all the majority of our fellow suckers want... and need! You see, Howard Beale did *not* offer solutions, only criticisms. That is all the movers and shakers of this empire can and will tolerate. When voices of dissent give out ideas of how to radically transform this empire into something much more viable, they are silenced or blacklisted from the mainstream media. To paraphrase and re-edit the famous Mark Twain quote: *Politics and Mainstream Media are the last refuge of scoundrels.* Of course, to make certain that Howard Beale did not begin offering real and viable solutions (or to incite mass demonstrations) the head of the Network, Arthur Jenson, had him come up for a 'One on One'. Actually, Jenson did *all* the talking, and how appropriate his monologue was for today's times. He begins by shouting at Beale that "You have meddled with the primal forces of nature, and I won't have it!!" Jenson then informs Beale, very powerfully, that "There is no America, there is no democracy. There is only IBM and AT& T and IT& T, Dow and Union Carbide and Exxon....We no longer have nations... The world is a 'College of Corporations' ..."

Watching *Network*, a film that every high school civics class should be shown, we see how Chayefsky realized then (as now) that with this dumbed down populace there is only *entertainment* and *consumerism*. Nothing else matters to the empire. Wars are staged and sold to us like toothpaste. Network news is scripted only to get us to watch their

commercials, and nothing more. We can get the same from reading supermarket tabloids. Debate on real issues for our very physical, economic and environmental survival are tossed aside to make room for sex scandals, false patriotism and scapegoating. The Congress, Presidency and mainstream media are composed of millionaires, as are the sports we watch. Everyone is super rich except the suckers who buy into the con. What the Trump phenomena revealed is how the rage of *Everyman* can be channeled into following demagogues right over the cliffs of reason. Sadly, the key is to make the suckers always look *below* their caste and never above it. The whole *Tea Party* movement has shown how that works. On the other side of that phony Two Party/One Party coin we have the Democrats who rail against the very corporate sharks that most of their party takes donations from. In *Network* the powers that be knew that it was healthy for the suckers to *vent* rather than act. This writer remembers standing in the public square with my activist friend and I holding our protest signs against the illegal (and immoral) invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. A lady, recently emigrated from Germany, approached me. "You know", she offered, "If my country did what yours did in the Middle East, there would be *thousands* out in the streets demonstrating, not just like the two of you here."

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