



AmericanRhetoric.com

Mr. Fred Rogers

Senate Statement on PBS Funding

delivered 1 May 1969, U.S. Capitol Building, Washington, D.C.



AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio

Senator Pastore: Alright Rogers, you've got the floor.

Mr. Rogers: Senator Pastore, this is a philosophical statement and would take about ten minutes to read, so I'll not do that. One of the first things that a child learns in a healthy family is trust, and I trust what you have said that you will read this. It's very important to me. I care deeply about children.

Senator Pastore: Will it make you happy if you read it?

Mr. Rogers: I'd just like to talk about it, if it's alright. My first children's program was on WQED fifteen years ago, and its budget was \$30. Now, with the help of the Sears-Roebuck Foundation and National Educational Television, as well as all of the affiliated stations -- each station pays to show our program. It's a unique kind of funding in educational television. With this help, now our program has a budget of \$6000. It may sound like quite a difference, but \$6000 pays for less than two minutes of cartoons.



AmericanRhetoric.com

Two minutes of animated, what I sometimes say, bombardment. I'm very much concerned, as I know you are, about what's being delivered to our children in this country. And I've worked in the field of child development for six years now, trying to understand the inner needs of children. We deal with such things as -- as the inner drama of childhood. We don't have to bop somebody over the head to...make drama on the screen. We deal with such things as getting a haircut, or the feelings about brothers and sisters, and the kind of anger that arises in simple family situations. And we speak to it constructively.

Senator Pastore: How long of a program is it?

Mr. Rogers: It's a half hour every day. Most channels schedule it in the noontime as well as in the evening. WETA here has scheduled it in the late afternoon.

Senator Pastore: Could we get a copy of this so that we can see it? Maybe not today, but I'd like to see the program.

Mr. Rogers: I'd like very much for you to see it.

Senator Pastore: I'd like to see the program itself, or any one of them.

Mr. Rogers: We made a hundred programs for EEN, the Eastern Educational Network, and then when the money ran out, people in Boston and Pittsburgh and Chicago all came to the fore and said we've got to have more of this neighborhood expression of care. And this is what -- This is what I give. I give an expression of care every day to each child, to help him realize that he is unique. I end the program by saying, "You've made this day a special day, by just your being you. There's no person in the whole world like you, and I like you, just the way you are." And I feel that if we in public television can only make it clear that feelings are mentionable and manageable, we will have done a great service for mental health. I think that it's much more dramatic that two men could be working out their feelings of anger -- much more dramatic than showing something of gunfire. I'm constantly concerned about what our children are seeing, and for 15 years I have tried in this country and Canada, to present what I feel is a meaningful expression of care.

Senator Pastore: Do you narrate it?

Mr. Rogers: I'm the host, yes. And I do all the puppets and I write all the music, and I write all the scripts --



AmericanRhetoric.com

Senator Pastore: Well, I'm supposed to be a pretty tough guy, and this is the first time I've had goose bumps for the last two days.

Mr. Rogers: Well, I'm grateful, not only for your goose bumps, but for your interest in -- in our kind of communication. Could I tell you the words of one of the songs, which I feel is very important?

Senator Pastore: Yes.

Mr. Rogers: This has to do with that good feeling of control which I feel that children need to know is there. And it starts out, "What do you do with the mad that you feel?" And that first line came straight from a child. I work with children doing puppets in -- in very personal communication with small groups:

*What do you do with the mad that you feel? When you feel so mad you could bite.
When the whole wide world seems oh so wrong, and nothing you do seems very right.
What do you do? Do you punch a bag? Do you pound some clay or some dough? Do
you round up friends for a game of tag or see how fast you go? It's great to be able to
stop when you've planned a thing that's wrong. And be able to do something else
instead, and think this song --*

*'I can stop when I want to. Can stop when I wish. Can stop, stop, stop
anytime....And what a good feeling to feel like this! And know that the feeling is
really mine. Know that there's something deep inside that helps us become
what we can. For a girl can be someday a lady, and a boy can be someday a
man.'*

Senator Pastore: I think it's wonderful. I think it's wonderful. Looks like you just earned the 20 million dollars.