

CRITICS WIN SHOOTOUT

Blood and Thunder Is Going Bloodless

HOLLYWOOD (AP)—Robert Fuller isn't happy: Congressional hearings and pressure groups have ruined Jess Harper's aim.

Bob, as lovers of TV westerns well know, plays Jess in NBC's "Laramie," now going into its third season.

"And this year, you can't kill a villain," revealed Fuller sadly.

"The worst you can do is wound him—and you're only allowed one shot. If this goes along any further our fight scenes with the heavies will be hair-pulling and scratching."

Fuller, it should be noted, reflects a popular Hollywood viewpoint but one rarely seen in print. The official position of the three major networks, really scared by high level condemnation of TV for its violence, appears to be one of never admitting excessive violence but promising to mend their ways.

Termed 'Escape' Shows

"I think that Westerns are the only real escape entertainment today," Fuller continued. "You

can pick up any newspaper and read cops and robber stuff. You can identify with almost any family in the situation comedies. But you can really get away watching a Western. And I just don't think the audience is going to be satisfied when, at the end, the villain's retribution is just getting pinked in the shoulder.

"I watch Westerns, too, because I like the activity. I expect certain things from Westerns. And I think the audience gets a certain sense of satisfaction when the hero winds things up conclusively by filling the villain with lead."

The new order, apparently, is spoiling the aim of all of TV's quick-drawing, straight-aiming heroes of the sagebrush. During the past week I've visited sets of four or five horse operas and so far have not heard the sound of a shot.

On the "Wagon Train" set Robert Norton was wringing out cold compresses to help break the fever of a sick—not wounded—man. The "Laramie" heroes, Fuller and John Smith, were holding a discussion with their new housekeeper, Spring Byington, once of "December Bride." The closest thing to violence was on the "Wells Fargo" set where a wounded man was being brought into town slung across the saddle of his horse.

Advertisement

