

Amalgamated Network Gets Started

Wynn Begins 15-Hour Daily Schedule on Eastern Hookup With Four-Hour Program; Preparing for Sponsors

WITH A FOUR-HOUR inaugural program, Amalgamated Broadcasting System, Ed Wynn's third network enterprise, got under way Sept. 25 over a 14-station hookup along the eastern seaboard. Heralded by Mr. Wynn and his associates as the forerunner of a nationwide system, encompassing upwards of 100 stations, the network presented features during the opening week not unlike those usual over stations and networks. There were no commercials on the opening night and, as BROADCASTING went to press, nothing could be heard of sponsored accounts, scheduled, though active preparations are being made to handle them.

Radio engineers who tuned in the programs noticed a high noise level. They stated this shortcoming might clear up as the regional network "shakes down". Amalgamated ascribed it to the large studio audience in New York on the opening night and predicted it would be eliminated.

Western Union Wires

WESTERN UNION lines are being employed—an innovation in network broadcasting. These circuits are not balanced for voice frequencies, but use of equalizing apparatus at the terminals, it is claimed, makes them comparable to regular telephone circuits, carrying the voice and music frequencies.

The network was opened with a variety program featuring names old and new to the audience. Among the "old timers" were Vaughn de Leath and Norman Brokenshire. Mr. Wynn himself was in Hollywood completing his new picture, but is expected to return to New York to take over the Amalgamated helm early in October. In the early stages of Amalgamated organization, he announced he would appear as master of ceremonies intermittently during evening programs. He is scheduled also to return to his Texaco "Fire Chief" program over NBC, unless that contract is abrogated.

Stations on Hookup

STATIONS aligned in the inaugural program and, presumably, to be continued on the first segment of the network were: WBNX, New York; WPEN, Philadelphia; WDEL, Wilmington; WCBM, Baltimore; WOL, Washington; WCNW, Brooklyn; WCAP, Asbury Park, N. J.; WHDH, Boston; WCAJ, Burlington, Vt.; WSYB, Rutland; WPRO, Providence; WNBH, New Bedford, Mass.; WSAR, Fall River, Mass.; and WFAS, White Plains, N. Y. Other stations originally slated for the net but which were not on the opening hookup are WTNJ, Trenton; WCAJ, Camden; WJBI, Red Bank, N. J., and WLBZ, Bangor, Me.

Following the inaugural program, the statement was made in behalf of Amalgamated that the



OFFICIALS OF WYNN NET—Left to right, George M. King, executive director of program department and artist bureau; Ed Wynn, president; Ota Gygi, vice president and Earl Bachman, director of sales.

network "now has something to show them" and that an active campaign would be launched for commercial business. This activity falls upon Earl Bachman, Amalgamated's director of sales for the network. In charge as general manager during Mr. Wynn's absence is Ota Gygi, vice president.

Station relations arrangements, under the original plan, provided that each affiliated station should pay the line charge for the haul from the closest network outlet. In other words, the Trenton station would pay for the haul from New York, the Philadelphia station from Trenton, the Baltimore station from Philadelphia, etc. The line costs are said to be far below the regular network charges because of the use of Western Union circuits.

May Sell Station Breaks

OTHER ORIGINAL policies enunciated by Mr. Wynn, understood to be in force, provide for the sale of network sustaining by affiliated stations with commercial announcement at station breaks so that, in effect, the station sells its local sponsor a program of network calibre. A nominal sustaining program charge on the stations is provided for such programs.

A fortnight ago Amalgamated stated that more than 30 sponsored programs would be consummated within the month. Mr. Wynn has asserted repeatedly that the purpose of his network is to provide a "new deal" for radio listeners and means of employment to thousands of artists and musicians now unemployed. He has declared that he hopes to enlarge the network by degrees, spreading from the east into the middle west, with WCFL, Chicago, as the connecting link. The next segment, he has indicated will be the Michigan state network operated by Kunsky-Trendle Broadcasting Co. In practically every instance, the stations thus far aligned are in the low power category and independently operated.

Amalgamated's rate card for the six basic Eastern stations in New York, Trenton, Philadelphia, Wilmington, Baltimore and Washington, quoted a \$510 an hour weekday rate up to 6 p.m., and \$850 an hour after 6 p.m. (See Sept. 15 issue of BROADCASTING.)

The inaugural program was

featured by welcoming addresses by Postmaster General James A. Farley; Judge E. O. Sykes, chairman of the Radio Commission, and Rep. Sol Bloom, of New York, who spoke from Washington via WOL. Numerous telegrams from prominent personalities in public life and on the stage, were read over the network. M. H. Aylesworth, NBC President was the sender of a message wishing his new contemporary full success. Felicitations also were offered by CBS.

Farley Speaks

POSTMASTER General Farley praised the enterprise and its motives. He congratulated Wynn as a genius in his field, and predicted a "new era" in chain operation. He called radio a wonderful instrument for good, and said that all other modes of communication "were left at the post by it". In conclusion he stated that President Roosevelt had requested him to extend his best wishes to Amalgamated for its success.

Congressman Bloom hailed the enterprise and its purposes, particularly the expression by Wynn that it would give work to hundreds of unemployed in the show business. Mr. Wynn, he declared, is uniting "the art of the theater with the science of radio". Judge Sykes congratulated the sponsors and paid tribute to Mr. Wynn's enterprise.

Mr. Gygi welcomed Amalgamated's new listeners in a short address from New York. He also introduced Curtis V. Dall, son-in-law of the President, who is said to be associated with Amalgamated as chairman of the board and former Rep. F. H. LaGuardia.

Saltzman Gets Job

MAJ. GEN. C. McK. Saltzman, former chairman of the Radio Commission on Sept. 20 was appointed vice president of the Merchant Fleet Corporation by Secretary of Commerce Roper. He will serve with Admiral Hutch I. Cone, chairman of the new Shipping Board Bureau, under the Department of Commerce, and with Thomas N. Woodward, as a member of the special advisory board on shipping. General Saltzman resigned from the Commission last July 19, giving ill health as his reason.

Local Station Plan Urged by Lafount

Limitation of Quota Rules Would Allow Increase

A RESOLUTION under which about 30 local stations using 100 watts power or less and removed from higher power stations, would be excluded from the quota stipulations of the radio regulations was proposed by Radio Commissioner Lafount Sept. 22. The measure, if adopted, also would open the way for the licensing of perhaps a dozen additional local stations in communities not now receiving good reception since the over-quota status of these states heretofore has prevented new station assignments.

If adopted, the measure also would open the way for possible slight increases of facilities in states now slightly over-quota, it was pointed out. Mr. Lafount said the purpose of his resolution, which has been referred to the legal and engineering divisions for study and report, is to "more nearly provide equality of radio reception."

Text of Resolution

THE RESOLUTION follows in full text:

WHEREAS Section 9 of the Radio Act of 1927 as amended declares: "that the people of all the zones established by Section 2 of the act are entitled to equality of radio broadcasting service, both of transmission and of reception," and

WHEREAS, the method prescribed in the same section of the amended act and intended to produce such equality of transmission but not of reception.

THEREFORE, I move that radio broadcasting stations classified at this time by the Commission as "Local Stations," and emitting 100 watts power or less, be not chargeable to quota, under the Commission's present system of quota charges, provided however: That said station be located at least one hundred miles air-line from any station emitting 5000 or more watts day or night, at least seventy-five miles air-line from any station emitting 250 or more watts and less than 5000 watts day or night, and fifty miles from any station classified by the Commission as local.

British Radio Columbus Here to "Discover" U. S.

BRITAIN'S outstanding radio commentator, S. P. B. Mais, arrived in New York Sept. 29 to "discover America" for the British radio audience. The result of a luncheon table conference with William Hard, NBC commentator who recently went to London to report the World Economic Conference, Mr. Mais' trip will be a free-lance one that will take him on a roving assignment over the country during which he will relay his observations to the British Broadcasting Corp. audience from local stations, and thence via short waves to London, every Friday night. In England he is being heralded as "The Modern Columbus." Talks will also be heard on the NBC-WEAF network at 4:20 p.m., EST, Oct. 13 and at 4:30 p.m., EST, on succeeding Fridays until Dec. 29.

An Appraisal of Television Development

By DR. C. B. JOLLIFFE
Chief Engineer, Federal Radio Commission

Definite Technical Progress Noted But Much to Be Done; Reception and Transmission Costs Are Problem

WHAT is the status of television today? That question, probably more than any other, has been put to engineers of the Federal Radio Commission during the last several years by persons in every walk of life.

Most concerned about television, of course, are those in the radio industry—broadcasters, set manufacturers and even advertisers and advertising agencies who ultimately are destined to be called upon to provide the wherewithal for the visual radio art. It is because of the interest being manifested by these groups that I make these observations about television at the request of BROADCASTING.

Let me say at the outset that the Commission is not disposed to lift the present experimental restriction on television until it is satisfied that television has reached a higher state of practicability, both technical and economic. Both are vital factors. When that time will arrive, I am not prepared to say.

Victim of Ballyhoo

VISUAL RADIO, it seems to me, has been the victim of much premature publicity about its imminent arrival. Material progress has been made on the technical side during the past few years, but many barriers still remain and much laboratory research is needed. The economic problems—the questions of how programs will be staged, their nature and variety, and who will pay to make them profitable—have not yet been solved.

There are many fundamental differences between aural or sound broadcasting and television. Consequently, it is rather difficult to compare the status of television today with that of sound broadcasting during its adolescence. I have heard leaders in the industry compare television development with the crystal set stage of broadcasting. That probably is as close an analogy as is possible.

Danger of Obsolescence

BUT WHILE the technical status may be somewhat comparable, there is no connection whatever between the economic phases. For example, if a television receiver were placed on the market today to pick up the images transmitted by present types of visual broadcasting stations, that apparatus probably would become obsolete within a few months. In the case of sound broadcasting, advancement in transmitting technique did not render receivers in use obsolete, as their poor quality was only made obvious by comparison.

As for the status of television today from the technical standpoint, I think the Commission's



Dr. Jolliffe

statement in its last annual report which was reiterated a few days ago is still an accurate summation. Then it said that, while no startling inventions had come to light during the preceding year, there has been steady improvement in the detail of pictures transmitted. The Commission pointed out then that the trend is toward use of bands in the ultra-high frequencies, above 30,000 kc.; that the cathode-ray type of electrical scanning seems to be supplanting the earlier mechanical types of scanning, but that with all these developments it appears that much more progress must still be made before television can be accepted as a satisfactory entertainment service.

Broadcasts Still Limited

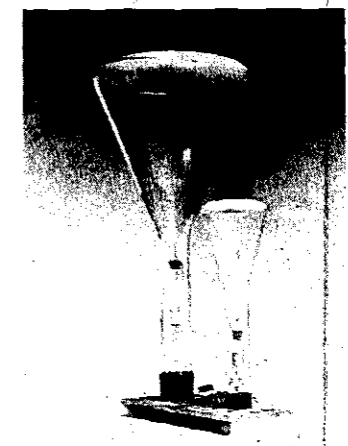
WHILE attempts have been made to broadcast scenes covering large areas, the report said, the majority of television stations have limited their transmissions to faces of one or two performers at most. This type of program, while of interest because of its novelty and usefulness for experimental work, has a very small amount of sustained "looker-in" interest and falls far short of what the public has been led to expect in the way of entertainment. This is particularly so in view of the technical improvements made during the last few years in sight-and-sound motion picture technique and the fact that these advances have created in the public mind a desire for very high technical standards of performance.

At the present time there is nothing to make us think that television will find its ultimate locus in other than the ultra-high frequencies above 30,000 kc., which is, in effect, still a more or less unexplored radio region. Reports

of experimentation in these bands from many licensees indicate that substantial progress is being made in harnessing them for various types of coverage including television. These short waves, which simulate light waves in their propagation characteristics, are severely limited in coverage.

Engineers are now working on the possibility of building ultra-high frequency television stations on the top of tall structures, so the programs literally will "rain down" on lookers-in. This would provide purely local coverage. The question whether there will be television networks like the sound networks raises another large problem, since there are no telephone lines now in use capable of carrying frequencies of the order required to transmit pictures. Thought has been given to distribution of programs through space, instead of by wire, with the use of repeater systems, but that would involve a big job of installing such repeater stations.

In any event the method of distribution of visual programs is not at present in existence and new



Cathode Ray—Heart of Television

THE CATHODE ray tube, being used with great success in television experimentation, seems destined to become visual radio's counterpart of the vacuum tube. The large tube pictured above is a 9-inch bulb of the character used in television experiments, and the little one is a 3-inch tube. These dimensions refer to the diameter of the picture screen, which is the white disk at the top of the "funnel", on which the image appears, since the tube is placed horizontally in the receiver. The funnel is coated with a fluorescent material which shines when a stream of electrons is projected at it.

methods would need to be developed in order to permit network distribution.

Some Cost Problems

AS TO television receivers, the cost problem also appears to be great. Until transmission reaches the technical stage when good-sized pictures of clear detail can be reproduced in the home and until definite standards for television transmission and reception are agreed to by the industry, the Commission probably will not be willing to say that visual radio has reached the stage where it can hold sustained public interest. Present production costs, however, would mean that a receiver capable of picking up such images would retail at a price far higher than the present high-grade broadcast receivers. Even if the price were not prohibitive, the cost of cathode-ray tubes, which would have to be replaced ever so often, tends to place maintenance costs beyond the reach of the ordinary citizen of limited income. This prohibition would be removed, however, as soon as this type of tube reaches the stages of mass production.

Economic Aspects

THE QUESTION naturally rises as to who will pay the bill for television. It seems obvious that it will cost more to stage a television program—a talking motion picture of the air—than to produce a sound program of comparable quality. Will the program sponsor foot this bill? Will television be economically feasible without so-called chain distribution of programs? These are the big economic questions.

In conclusion, we know that definite technical progress is being made in visual radio but that many more problems remain. We know that manufacturing standards must be established so that all methods will include similar systems of synchronization, the same number of pictures per second, and the same number of lines per picture. We know little, however about the economic side; and how television will be supported once it arrives.

Television Committee

A SPECIAL committee of the Radio Manufacturers Association, headed by E. T. Cunningham, president of RCA Victor Co., has been appointed to make a special study of the future of television broadcasting. It will study the desirability of various visual frequencies and consider recommendations for television bands to the Radio Commission. Serving with Mr. Cunningham are R. Roy McCanne, president of Stromberg-Carlson Co., James M. Skinner, president of Philadelphia Storage Battery Co., and Powel Crosley, president of Crosley Radio Corp.