

# BERGEN BATTLE

## NBC, CBS Vie For Comedian

ONE OF THE highest-priced packages in radio, Edgar Bergen and his wooden assistants, was the center of a tug-of-war last week between NBC and CBS. Not an inch of ground had been gained by either at week's end.

Mr. Bergen's show, which his present sponsor, Standard Brands, is eager to release because of its price, was still on NBC (Sundays, 8-8:30 p.m.), but CBS was tugging hard to pull him to its network.

In its efforts to get Mr. Bergen, CBS was proposing a deal more like commonplace radio contracts than like the \$2,000,000 outright "purchase" of *Amos 'n' Andy* recently. A high CBS executive said, however, that although the proposal contemplated a straight salary for Mr. Bergen it also embraced some unusual features,

which he would not describe.

CBS, it was learned, had made a strenuous presentation to General Motors Corp. for sponsorship of the comedian and had received, at least, qualified interest from the motor firm, in return.

Earlier, Emerson Foote, president of Foote, Cone & Belding, which has the Frigidaire portions of the General Motors account, had independently proposed the Bergen show to the motor corporation's high officials, possibly as a means of inviting other GM business into his agency.

General Motors was understood to have turned Mr. Foote down, with the explanation that the show's price was too high.

### Still A Prospect

After the motor company had rejected Mr. Foote's proposal, however, a CBS official insisted that GM was not out as a prospect "as far as CBS is concerned." A General Motors official, however, intimated that, at least for the present, GM had decided against sponsorship of Mr. Bergen.

The price of Mr. Bergen's package—\$30,000 a week—was the chief deterrent to immediate arrangement of a sponsor successor to Standard Brands. The latter was reportedly anxious to drop Mr. Bergen's show as well as its 8-8:30 p.m. Sunday time on NBC because of a budget reduction.

Mr. Bergen's contract with the advertiser, however, can be cancelled only with his consent. It is doubtful that Standard Brands will be able to unload Mr. Bergen until another sponsor, whom he finds acceptable, comes along.

Meanwhile, as CBS made vigorous overtures to Mr. Bergen, on the one hand, and to General Mo-

tors on the other, NBC, for which the ventriloquist has broadcast for many years, was exerting equally strenuous efforts to turn up another sponsor for him.

If Mr. Bergen were to go to another network, his departure would break the powerful NBC comedy sequence of Jack Benny, Phil Harris, Mr. Bergen and Fred Allen, which has held an iron clutch on the Sunday night radio audience.

The advertisers, to whom NBC had presented Mr. Bergen, were not known. Niles Trammell, NBC president, was taking a personal hand in the campaign to keep Mr. Bergen, and tight secrecy was being maintained as to his progress.

It was understood that part of the CBS proposal to Mr. Bergen and to General Motors involved a promise to place Mr. Bergen's program in the same time spot on CBS as it occupied on NBC. He would



NEW MEMBER of CBS Hollywood staff, James Fonda (l), who will represent Columbia in the handling of the "Amos 'n' Andy" package, is welcomed to the fold by Hubbell Robinson Jr., CBS vice president and director of programs. Mr. Fonda is former radio production manager of Chicago office of Foote, Cone, & Belding.

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then follow the *Amos 'n' Andy* show, the two of them reinforcing the CBS Sunday evening schedule to a point which would seriously threaten NBC's dominance that night.

NBC, it was understood, was basing its presentation to advertisers on the fact that Mr. Bergen is an old standby in the 8-8:30 time on NBC and that he has a ready-made audience, which is one of the biggest in radio.

One sponsor prospect, which NBC did not solicit, of course, was General Motors. Mr. Bergen's present program time immediately precedes Mr. Allen's. Mr. Allen is sponsored by Ford.

## WNHC-TV Is New CBS-TV Affiliate

WNHC-TV New Haven, Conn., has been added to the CBS-TV network, it was announced last week. The agreement was negotiated by James Milne, WNHC-TV general manager, for the Elm City Broadcasting Corp., owner of the station, and by William A. Schudt Jr., CBS director of station relation.

WNHC-TV operates on Channel 6 (82-88 mc).

CBS-TV now has stations in 13 of the major markets of the country.

## FCC '49 Blues

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ship, and that was not in the cards during a Democratic administration.

Now in his 71st year, Sen. White has retired to his home in Maine. The question naturally is raised whether he could withstand the pressures of the FCC chairmanship. His interest in radio and communications is well-established and it is thought that if he indicated any desire for the post his erstwhile colleagues in the Senate would go to bat for him.

It does not necessarily follow that other key posts on the FCC must change with a change in administration. Those positions which are not Civil Service, however, such as secretary (occupied since 1937 by T. J. Slowie), general counsel and his three assistants, and parallel positions in the engineering and accounting bureaus, are subject to administrative change at the discretion of a newly-organized Commission. The division heads and assistant heads, however, if they hold Civil Service status, usually can revert to regular status. In the case of Mr. Slowie, it is expected he will resign. He was secretary to the late Congressman B. M. Jacobsen of Clinton, Iowa, before he joined the FCC. He has kept out of controversy over the years. Changes in top level personnel in the Law Bureau are regarded as inevitable.

It is doubted whether the Engineering Bureau, now headed by John A. Willoughby, acting chief engineer, or the Accounting Bureau, headed by William F. Norfleet, would be affected with a change in administration. These are regarded as technical bureaus and their heads, as a rule, do not become involved in fundamental policy or political matters.

# MUSIC PACT SEEN AFM Talks Held

By IRV MARDER

THE LIKELIHOOD that differences between the AFM and the recording companies may be settled this week was voiced by industry observers following three lengthy conferences between James C. Petrillo and representatives of seven leading record firms.

The meetings were held at Mr. Petrillo's New York offices on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday last week. A fourth session was held Friday afternoon. The companies represented were Capitol, Columbia, Decca, MGM, Mercury, King and RCA-Victor. Some of the firms sent several representatives, and attorneys for both sides were present in profusion.

Neither Mr. Petrillo, nor the recorders, for whom Frank White, president of Columbia Records, acted as unofficial spokesman, would comment on the progress of the dis-

cussions, or talk about specific matters under consideration. But it is already known that the purpose of the parleys is to fill in the details of the so-called Petrillo Plan for lifting the record ban through use of a trusteeship. The AFM president sent his proposed plan to the record companies for consideration about three weeks ago. It is also admitted that any plan, jointly worked out during the current conferences, will upon completion be sent to Washington for scrutiny by the several interested government agencies.

### Record Men Sit

Mr. Petrillo kept the record men waiting in the corridor outside his New York offices for a full hour on Thursday before the meeting began. The union chieftain was occupied at the time with a meeting of the AFM's national board.

Thus, from 3 o'clock—the time set for the meeting—until 4, about 30 record company executives cooled their heels, becoming increasingly restive. At 3:30 p.m., Mr. Petrillo dispatched a henchman to tell the impatient businessmen that he was so sorry to keep them waiting, but that he was still tied up with "some very important business."

Presently an unidentified record company executive, probably a third or fourth vice president, rapped on the window of an AFM secretary's office with an earnest, but vain, request for a deck of cards. Meanwhile, the president of another firm was observed matching pennies with a company attorney, in an attempt to offset the tedium. A bystander cruelly remarked that this probably was an accurate index to the financial status of the ban-bound record business.