

POWER PLAYS TAKE SHAPE IN TELEVISION NETWORKING

- NBC buys WKNB-TV New Britain, its first uhf
 - CBS-TV affiliations go to Gene Autry, Storer
 - DuMont begins adjusting to trimmed operations
- FIRST UHF FOR NBC

Bulletin: NBC late Friday bought WKNB-AM-TV New Britain, Conn., for \$606,000, contingent upon FCC approval of the sale and the move of the tv transmitter to Mt. Higby near Middletown, Conn. The network plans to boost the ch. 30 station to a million watts.

NBC last week was negotiating to buy ch. 30 WKNB-TV New Britain, Conn., which would become the network's first owned television station in the uhf band.

WKNB-TV is now the CBS-TV affiliate for the New Britain-Hartford area.

If NBC purchases the uhf outlet, new power plays between NBC-TV and CBS-TV will be inevitable.

Such a purchase would mean that NBC would have no further interest in the outcome of the contest for ch. 3 in Hartford between Hartford Telecasting Co. and Travelers Broadcasting Co., owner of WTIC Hartford. WTIC is one of NBC's oldest radio affiliates.

With NBC owning a uhf outlet in the Hartford area, the winner of the ch. 3 contest presumably would hope to affiliate with CBS. One of the principals and proposed general manager of Hartford Telecasting Co., WTIC's opposition in the case, is Harry C. Butcher, wartime naval aide to Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower and pre-war Washington vice president of CBS.

The network position of ch. 8 WNHC-TV New Haven, the only other vhf assignment in Connecticut, would also be in question. WNHC-TV is now affiliated with both CBS-TV and NBC-TV. About 40% of its network programs are CBS-TV and 45% NBC-TV.

WNHC-TV, now operating at maximum power of 316 kw, has its transmitter some 26 air miles from Hartford and throws a strong signal into that population center.

Negotiations between NBC and Julian Gross, president and principal stockholder of WKNB-TV, have been in progress for several weeks. Points of difference were said to be still unresolved. One source close to the negotiations said that NBC was hoping to make an arrangement contingent upon FCC approval of a move of the WKNB transmitter site to Mt. Higby, a commanding elevation south of Hartford and some 23 air miles north of New Haven.

Such a contingency would not be unlike that which was attached to the purchase by CBS-TV of WSTV-TV Steubenville, Ohio, for \$3 million. That deal will be closed only if the FCC approves the move of the ch. 9 station to the

Pittsburgh area [B•T, Nov. 22, 1954].

For political reasons NBC probably will seek an early conclusion to the WKNB-TV negotiations, it was believed. The network hopes to have at least one uhf acquisition or application in the bag before forthcoming Senate committee investigations get underway.

As matters stand, two major investigations of communications, with emphasis on television networking, are set—one by the Senate Interstate & Foreign Commerce Committee and the

other by the equally powerful Senate Judiciary Committee (see story, page 73). In both, it will be to the advantage of networks to show that they are extending helping hands to uhf, a service that already has been presented to the Senate as the poverty row of tv.

CBS-TV already has contracted for one uhf. Its purchase of ch. 19 WOKY-TV Milwaukee for a total investment of \$835,000 [B•T, Nov. 22, 1954] awaits FCC approval.

Assuming NBC acquires WKNB-TV, it will have only one more uhf to go before filling its television portfolio of five v's and two u's. The network now owns the limit of five vhf's, WRCA-TV New York, WNBQ (TV) Chicago, WNBK (TV) Cleveland, WRC-TV Washington and KRCA-TV Los Angeles.

CBS owns WCBS-TV New York, WBBM-TV Chicago and KNXT (TV) Los Angeles. Assuming its purchases of Steubenville's ch. 9 and Milwaukee's ch. 19 go through, CBS will be able to acquire one more v and another u. Selection of its second uhf station is expected to follow NBC's first uhf deal. Frank Stanton,

WDTV (TV) SALE APPROVED; SWITCH READIED TO KDKA-TV

RECORD sale of DuMont's ch. 2 WDTV (TV) Pittsburgh for \$9.75 million to Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. was approved by FCC last week and steps were taken promptly for consummation of the ownership transfer today (Monday). FCC will be asked to change the call to KDKA-TV, representing the companion operation to Westinghouse's pioneer radio outlet, KDKA Pittsburgh.

The price for Pittsburgh's sole commercial vhf station is the highest yet paid for a single broadcast station, FCC noted. Chairman George C. McConaughy did not vote while Comr. Robert T. Bartley issued a dissenting opinion sharply differing with the majority ruling taken by Comrs. Rosel H. Hyde, E. M. Webster, John C. Doerfer and Robert E. Lee. Comr. Frieda B. Hennock was not present.

As stated at the time of the signing of the purchase agreement [B•T, Dec. 13, 6, 1954], Chris J. Witting, WBC president, said "WDTV will continue to carry programs from all four networks until such time as there are other vhf facilities in operation in Pittsburgh."

The application disclosed WDTV eventually would seek to become the city's primary NBC-TV affiliate. An agreement to that effect between Westinghouse and NBC was submitted with the application.

Aside from the newly acquired WDTV,

Westinghouse also operates KDKA-AM-FM Pittsburgh, WBZ-AM-TV Boston, WPTZ (TV) and KYW Philadelphia, KPIX (TV) San Francisco, WBZA Springfield, Mass., KEX-AM-FM Portland, Ore., and WOWO Fort Wayne, Ind. Westinghouse is applicant for ch. 8 at Portland, where an FCC examiner has recommended a grant on that channel to a competitor, North Pacific Television Inc.

The transfer application also disclosed that

Harold C. Lund, WDTV manager under DuMont ownership, would remain in that capacity under Westinghouse.

DuMont, aside from its network and manufacturing interests [B•T, Jan. 3], retains ownership of WABD (TV) New York and WTTG (TV) Washington.

Pittsburgh presently is also served by ch. 16 WENS (TV) and educational ch. 13 WQED (TV). Permits are outstanding for ch. 47 WTVQ (TV) and ch. 53 WKJF-TV. part:

In this transfer, I see a substantial diminution of competition. In the absence of a public hearing on such transfers, I am unable to conclude, in accordance with the statutory requirement, that this transfer will serve the public interest. I am unable to reach a determination here, in the absence of a factual record based upon the very factors set forth in the Commission's Rules on multiple ownership, necessary to determine whether there will be a concentration of control inconsistent with the public interest.



MR. WITTING

MR. LUND