

WMBR editorials helped affect vote

An editorial campaign by WMBR Jacksonville, Fla., on behalf of a state senatorial candidate was described as a factor in his victory at the May 9 Florida primaries.

John E. Mathews Jr. received WMBR endorsement in a month-long series of 60-second editorials, about 12 a day. The pre-primary favorite, incumbent Wayne E. Ripley, and a third candidate, Benedict M. Kotecki, were offered free time for reply. Sen. Ripley, through Harry Radcliffe Adv., bought 18 60-second announcements on WMBR and used free time on seven days. The third candidate didn't reply to the station's offer.

Editorials were voiced by Sidney L. Beighley Jr., WMBR vice president-general manager. Mr. Mathews received over half the votes cast and a runoff is not required. Donald R. Smith, WMBR station manager, said the station had editorialized against some of Sen. Ripley's legislative acts earlier in the year and supported some of the legislation favored by Mr. Mathews.

The three candidates appeared in local broadcasts, including a one-hour program, *Jacksonville Forum*, on WJXT (TV), where they answered questions from three newsmen. A statement on the program by Sen. Ripley, cited as an element in the final vote, dealt with the school problem. He is quoted as observing on WJXT, "All I know is what I read in the newspapers." The quotation was repeated frequently and derisively during the campaign.

Broadcast and newspaper reports of the candidates' sharply differing views on key campaign issues were factors in the voting.

In a post-election statement Mr. Mathews paid tribute to WMBR, saying, "You have rendered a great public service. May your efforts be recognized. May others accept responsibility now that a courageous station has led the way." The two Jacksonville newspapers took no stand on behalf of any of the three candidates, Mr. Smith said. WMBR began editorializing in September 1958 when it came under the ownership of Ben Strouse, operator of WWDC-AM-FM Washington.

Kops hits restrictions on broadcast editorials

Restrictions on broadcast editorializing in political campaigns, proposed in the Senate's Freedom of Communications Subcommittee report, would reduce stations from journalists to carriers, according to Daniel W. Kops, WAVZ New Haven, Conn., chairman

of the NAB Committee on Editorializing.

In a May 17 address to the New Jersey Broadcasters Assn., meeting at New Brunswick, Mr. Kops said the report of the subcommittee, of which Sen. Ralph W. Yarborough (D-Tex.) is chairman, had proposed ground rules that would take much of the editorial judgment away from licensees, giving some to a candidate and some to the commission (BROADCASTING, April 23). "Free broadcast journalism would never be the same," he said.

Also appearing at the New Jersey meeting was Jerry Boros, of the communications law firm of Fly, Shuebruk, Blume & Gaguine, who spoke on "The Broadcasting Climate in Washington." Mr. Boros warned that the proposed "birth control" plan relating to am broadcasting might bring several problems with it including the possibility of economic regulations and the probability that more applications would be filed against existing stations at renewal time.

Mr. Boros said the FCC would probably increase the emphasis placed on field inquiries which would lead to hearings on such matters as illegal transfers of control; rigged contests, lack of first class engineers and technical violations.

KWTV editorial brings acclaim from citizens

An election editorial carried by KWTV (TV) Oklahoma City brought an endorsement signed by 377 residents of Midwest City, a suburb. The editorial, broadcast election eve (April 30), disagreed with front-page editorials carried April 29-30 by the *Daily* and *Sunday Oklahoman*, owned by Oklahoma Publishing Co. (WKY-AM-TV Oklahoma City).

The newspapers had criticized the campaign methods of W. P. (Bill) Atkinson, one of 15 gubernatorial candidates, charging him with "deceit" and adding that "forgery of another candidate's name is despicable trickery." The latter was in reference to handbills circulated in a past campaign. Mr. Atkinson sued the newspapers for \$10 million.

Bruce Palmer, KWTV news editor who writes and voices the station's editorials, stated on the air the newspaper attacks were "based on great personal animosity that goes far beyond the usual reasons of political difference" and said the charges deserve "a full judicial airing." Mr. Palmer and Edgar T. Bell, KWTV general manager, received phone calls after the broadcast endorsing the station for its courage and appeal for fairness.

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