

MEETING THE CRISIS

NBC Reinforces; CBS Stations Buck Cuts

THE biggest problem facing network radio—how to re-stabilize it—was approached in separate but significant moves last week by the management of NBC and a group of affiliates of CBS Radio.

● NBC, to coordinate its radio and TV activities more fully, put NBC-TV Vice President Sylvester L. (Pat) Weaver Jr. in charge of both the radio and TV networks and installed Frank White as vice president and general manager of both, almost simultaneously starting to promote the use of radio and TV in combination as the most effective advertising buy.

● Looking toward the July 1-2 "Crisis Conference" of CBS Radio affiliates and CBS officials, members of the affiliates' steering committee met in an agenda session whose tenor gave notice that the network faces a scrap if and when it undertakes any major reduction in rates.

The NBC realignment, calculated to result in "more use of radio in both radio-only and television



Mr. WEAVER

... heads radio and TV networks



Mr. WHITE

... vice president & gen. manager

made our NBC television network such a success. The NBC television audience will have the advantage of a coordinated schedule of enter-

prises a more exciting supplementary program schedule on radio. We expect the result to be more use of radio in both radio-only

and television as combined sales tools, and authorities expected that this would become standard procedure.

The 43-year-old Mr. Weaver, with NBC since August 1949, has won reputation as a new-program idea man. Some of the departures from standard programming concepts which he has installed at NBC-TV are represented in the Saturday-night *Show of Shows*, with its rotation of stars, and *Today*, the two-hour early-morning communications program.

He started his career with advertising copy writing in Los Angeles following graduation from Dartmouth College in 1930, moved next into radio program production with CBS-Don Lee network, and became program manager of Don Lee's KFRC San Francisco. Moving to New York in 1935, he produced the *Fred Allen Show* for Young & Rubicam. By 1936 he had become manager of the agency's radio department. In 1938 he joined American Tobacco Co. and a year later

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rebroadcast rights to the FCC, but also feared that the new rule could violate their property rights in program ownership. Mounting pressure prompted the FCC in November to drop the mandate for an explanation, but the commission reiterated the need for a station to refrain from arbitrary refusals of rebroadcast privileges. Station owners breathed a bit easier when the FCC stated that the tightening of rebroadcast rules was not intended to jeopardize program rights.

Television's competition and the fact that the radio networks were turning back more and more time to local affiliates gave impetus to specialty programming that catered to audiences of different backgrounds and ages. The top-40 format was emerging. It featured disk jockeys with "in" talk and showmanship that appealed to the young, and a playlist rigorously confined to the top-selling records of the day. The pioneers were group owners Gordon McLendon of Dallas and Todd Storz of Omaha.

AM radio continued to air shows with big-name stars. New syndicated ventures in 1952 had Tyrone Power starring as an idealistic senator in *Freedom U.S.A.*, and Dana Andrews as an American spy in *I was a Communist for the FBI*. ABC hoped that Marlene Dietrich as Mlle. Madou, owner and chanteuse of the *Cafe-Istanbul* would lure listeners. The top evening network radio shows included several old favorites such as *Jack Benny*, *Lux Theater*, *Walter Winchell*, *Gangbusters*, *Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts*, *Bing Crosby* and *Gene Autry*. Despite such programming, a typical radio listener tuned to radio for an average of 28 minutes less each day than in 1951; but an increase of two million new radio homes partially offset this loss.

FM radio gained the potential for new listeners when the U.S. Supreme Court in June held that the District of Columbia Public Utilities Commission had acted within its rights in permitting radio programming on street cars and buses. The high court's decision set aside an earlier appeals court ruling that transcasting deprived riders of their liberty without due process of law. "The sweeping 7-1 decision," BROADCASTING commented, "opens a new radio vista. It sanctions the birth of a new advertising medium. It affords the opportunity to a substantial number of FM broadcasters to earn a return on their investments."

While the new ruling portended growth in FM, the passage of the McFarland bill, sponsored by Senator Ernest McFarland (D-Ariz.), and the FCC's issuance of its Sixth Report and Order presaged even more dramatic change. When President Truman signed the McFarland bill in July, he authorized the first major overhaul of the Communications Act of 1934. The salient provisions of the new act permitted the FCC to issue cease-and-desist orders in addition to license revocations; required the FCC to act on a case within three months of filing or six months after a hearing concluded, or to explain the reason to Congress; required the FCC to answer protests or petitions for rehearing within 15 days; placed on the FCC the burden of proof that a licensee was not qualified for renewal; forbade commissioners who resigned to practice before the FCC for one year after resignation; withdrew the FCC's automatic power to revoke licenses of those found guilty in federal court of antitrust violations; prohibited broadcasters from charging more for political advertising than for regular commer-

cial ads; prohibited staff personnel from recommending actions to commissioners, and permitted protests against grants to be made up to 30 days after the grant.

In its final form the enacted legislation represented a series of compromises that, as BROADCASTING summarized, "can be lived with, not only by the licensees, but the licensors. It isn't a broadcaster's bill, but it does give the broadcaster a better shake before the commission. It doesn't solve the broadcaster's dilemma on political libel in this feverish election year, but it does give him a headstart on remedial legislation at the next Congress. . . ."

The FCC's Sixth Report and Order, issued April 14, established a national television policy for the United States, ending the three-and-a-half-year television freeze. The salient provisions of this report provided 2,053 station assignments to 1,291 communities; designated 617 VHF and 1,436 UHF assignments; reserved 242 noncommercial educational channels, including 80 VHF; and determined maximum power for channels 2-6 as 100 kw, for channels 7-13 as 316 kw, for channels 14-83 as 1,000 kw. Going into 1951, there were only the 108 pre-freeze stations operating; but by the end of the year the FCC received 700 applications and issued 90 authorizations for new television stations.

The Sixth Report's rules on educational reservations and on UHF allocations caused the most repercussions. The FCC reserved the educational assignments for only one year, after which the educational proponents would have to compete with commercial applicants. To establish local campaigns to raise support and funds for educational TV, the Ford Foundation provided money to the Fund for Adult Educa-