

TV opened doors for the "young Turks" and top 40 became local radio's formula

obvious that the networks had overcommitted themselves to high-priced radio talent and productions which no longer had pulling power among advertisers. *Broadcasting* magazine reported that "the situation had deteriorated so badly that in some cases big advertisers were asking competing networks to submit sealed bids, with the account to go to the lowest bidder."

In October, NBC Radio, in an attempt to rescue network radio from the pyre, announced its new radio "Economic Plan," one of many such hopeful remedies to come from all the networks. The plan, which marked a startling departure from existing network radio policies, included revisions of rates and network option time and offered advertisers a complete freedom of choice as to how many or how few markets to use. It was also notable for opening up more network programs and time for local sales.

Two months later CBS Radio announced its own revolutionary new selling policies. CBS's venture, designated "Selective Facilities Plan," allowed sponsors to use a minimum of affiliates and substituted dollar volume discounts for station hour discounts. The plan specifically stipulated that the "advertiser is to make his program available to the entire CBS Radio Network and in areas where the advertiser does not sponsor the program, he is to allow his program to be sold through CBS Radio to other non-competitive advertisers without recompense to him."

LAST-DITCH STAND

Many observers interpreted the move as a last-ditch effort to preserve a full schedule of conventional, top-talent network programming.

It was a stand undermined from the start. The radio networks had distress merchandise and advertisers were all too aware of it. Procter & Gamble, a consistent power in radio (billing more than \$18 million in 1951), in particular, persistently chopped away at nighttime rates in attempts to bring them down to daytime levels. Such advertising pressure bore fruit in the summer of 1952, when CBS set still another rate formula, this one cutting nighttime rates approximately 25%. NBC, not to be underpriced, followed suit a few days later.

These were not easy moves for the networks to make. It's difficult to abandon a luxury liner before it sinks. But the independent stations had no such inhibitions barring their way to the future. Formerly they had always followed

in the networks' wake, programming mostly low-budgeted, syndicated replicas of popular programs of the day.

WNEW New York was an outstanding exception. Under the enlightened guidance of station general manager Bernice Judis, the Bulova-owned station was a trend-setter of historic dimensions. Its *Make Believe Ballroom*, presided over by Martin Block, was certainly one of the country's most popular and influential disc jockey shows. It carved a place in radio for popular music and strong, informal, companion-type personalities that was to deepen with the passing years.

WNEW was also an innovator in news. Radio, since the 30s, had been active in this area, especially in the use of commentators, but the importance of news was never fully appreciated.

After Pearl Harbor, however, the need for news was accentuated. WNEW tied up with the *New York Daily News* (the newspaper supplied the information and copy for the news summaries) and broadcast regular five-minute newscasts on the hour. Again it set the style for the industry. Other independent operators—for like most other businesses follow-the-leader is the national past-time of radio—also instituted hourly newscasts. The networks, too, gave added emphasis to news coverage during the war. CBS Radio regularly broke into a prime time network hour, programming commentator Elmer Davis with news summaries from 8:55 to 9:00 p.m.

Gradually but surely the changing world and television pressured radio out of its rigid entertainment mold and whipped it into a more uninhibited form. By the early years of the frantic 50s, the non-chameleon-type industry that was radio began to change its colors. The independents led the way; they were the least bound by tradition.

WNEW official John Sullivan believes now that, "Television was the best thing that could have happened to independent stations." But back in the days when television's impact was hitting the hardest, most independents probably would not have agreed. Many of them, free from network relationships for the first time, since by then dozens of stations were breaking their links with the chains, suddenly found themselves without a programming concept. The plug was out of the network board and there was a gaping time void to be filled.

Then a new wrinkle appeared on the old face of radio. Numerous research studies showed that more people were listening to the radio between 6 and 9 a.m. each day than were tuned in during

the supposed prime evening hours. Disc jockeys, splicing music, news, time checks, weather reports and friendly, easy chatter, became masters of this previously unrecognized course. Underpriced from the start and gaining an ever-increasing audience as more and more radios went into automobiles, the early morning time periods became one of the advertising beacons of the new radio that was developing.

It is said that wherever opportunity lurks, clever men are not far behind. Radio of the post-World War II period represented a honeycomb of opportunity and buzzing into prominence came a group of so-called "young Turks," of whom Todd Storz, Gerald Bartell and Gordon McLendon were, perhaps, most outstanding.

ONE-STATION OPERATIONS

Most of these frontiersmen came out of relative obscurity with one-station operations which they quickly parlayed into prosperous hometown chains of five and six. In the process they developed a remarkably successful and greatly emulated approach to music-and-news programming. Unhindered by radio pasts or interest-diverting television connections, these young men (most of them in their 30s) sold radio in an aggressive, positive fashion that made no allowances for past history or future forebodings. For them, radio was a new medium and television didn't count.

But they were not true pathfinders. "We follow the trend," Todd Storz once commented, "we do not try to lead it." Following the well-marked music-and-news trail left by WNEW, they gave the public what it wanted—and what it wanted, it seemed to this new breed of broadcasters, was mostly popular music. In the 50s, popular music meant, for the most part, rock 'n' roll.

Checking listings in music publishing trade journals, the "young Turks" broadcast the top 40 tunes, playing them consistently throughout the week, along with a smattering of old favorites and dark-horse newcomers.

News, predominately local in emphasis and in some cases heavily tinged with sensationalism, had less importance in the formula programming of the 50s. It was introduced and signed-off with beeps, teletypes and just about any sound effect that would connote excitement. For high-pitched action was the keynote of a formula operation, sound effects its theme song and wild but imaginative promotion its rallying cry.

Promotion on a McLendon or Storz station, for instance, could mean any-