

American Television Forum of the Air

Reviewed Sunday (12), 3-3:30 p.m. (EDT). Style—Discussion. Sustaining via the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). Produced under supervision of Ralph Burgin, WNBW program manager; writer, Theodore Granik; moderator this program, Rad Hall. Panel: J. Frederick Dewhurst, 20th Century Fund; Dr. A. Gitlow, New York University; Nathan Bohack, Radio & Television Journal.

A slick, superficial film produced by the 20th Century Fund and the *Encyclopedia Britannica* kicked off on the edition caught. Productivity, if increased in terms of total and per capita, can be the solution to all our economic problems, the film stated, with the implication that fear of depression need not bother us provided output goes up. The film was neatly done; so neatly, in fact, that it sped thru without allowing time for the viewer to think things out for himself. It recorded the rise of productivity with the mass installation of machines, and related that with the increasing standard of living.

Few people would deny that mechanization will necessarily reduce the workday while hiking the standard of living. But to gloss over or omit entirely the problems concomitant with it is to take a shallow view of the over-all question. This was in part remedied in the second half of the show, which found Rad Hall emceeing in place of Ted Granik, who for so many years has pounded the gavel on the AM side.

Machines' Threat Discounted

Hall raised the question of whether machines might not also create unemployment. J. Frederick Dewhurst of the 20th Century Fund, consultant on the film, admitted they might sometimes, but on a temporary basis only. Nathan Bohack of *Radio & Television Journal*, noted that high productivity might eventually lead to overproduction, which in turn would mean a depression. Dr. A. Gitlow, of the economics department of New York University, countered with a lengthy theoretical discourse which attempted to show that even more productivity is the answer to overproduction, since prices will fall so low that everyone, presumably including the unemployed, will be able to buy the products. His answer to the problem of joblessness: a mass re-education and retraining program to fit those without work for other fields, which the assumption implies will not be hit in a general economic catastrophe.

The program needs more dynamic exponents of the various points of view represented, and more diverse points of view on each subject brought onto the show. The forum part of this opus seemed very static, and some device to brighten that segment of the program also must be developed. *Sam Chase.*

My Good Wife

Reviewed June 3

Sustaining Via NBC

Fridays, 9:30-10 p.m.

Director, Wynn Wright; supervisor, Richard P. McDonagh; writer, Sam Taylor assisted by Russell Beggs; music, Norman Cloutier and his orchestra. Cast: Arlene Francis and John Conte.

Excellent acting and slick scripting made the initial episode of NBC's new marital comedy series good sponsor bait, and a thoroly entertaining show. As portrayed by Arlene Francis and John Conte, Kay and Steve Emerson are the more sophisticated counterparts of Ozzie and Harriet. Married 10 years, they live in a fashionable New York suburb and have one child, a daughter.

Employing the flashback-narration technique to good advantage, the script quickly established the Emersons' character by tracing back thru

The Timid Soul

Reviewed Wednesday (22), 9-9:30 p.m. (EDT). Style—Comedy drama. Sustaining via the DuMont television network. Producers, Wilbur Stark and Jerry Layton; director, Jock Hurdle; script, based on the comic strip by H. T. Webster, written by Tom Langer. Cast: Ernest Truex, Sylvia Field, Raymond Johnson, Frank Wilson, Butch Cavell, Larry Gates, Paul Mather.

The presentation on video of the doings of Caspar Milquetoast, who has earned immortality thru his creator, H. T. Webster, must have seemed a charming idea for a warm-hearted, easy-going family situation comedy. Unfortunately, the sample vehicle mounted by DuMont was just plain slow rather than easy-going, and more dull than warm-hearted. This was so despite the casting of Ernest Truex as Caspar, and Sylvia Field (Mrs. Truex) as his ever-loving spouse, Madge.

It would be too simple to pin these faults on the scripter, Tom Langer. Video has proved itself a very difficult medium for situation comedy. Strongly delineated characters, as in *The Goldbergs*, are needed as a firm base on which to build the plot. But in *The Timid Soul*, the characters are the quintessence of drabness almost by definition, and to change them would be tantamount to committing an act of lese majeste on the comic strip classic. The conclusion must be that unless some extraordinarily imaginative ideas can be injected into the program, it must be deemed too anemic to sustain itself.

Fire Safety Week

The doings on the sample show were concerned with the marking of fire prevention week, in which householders must clean out their cellars. Thru no fault of his own, Caspar was delegated to address the local population at the big meeting winding up the drive. But when it came to cleaning out his own premises, he was too tender-hearted to junk anything, despite the help of Madge's ringing slogan: "When in doubt, throw it out." Further, he agreed to store the pup-tent and ping-pong table of a neighbor's child when the lad's parents threw them away, and he also added an encyclopedia set bought from a fast-talking salesman. Of course, he wound up with a police summons for harboring one of the town's dirtiest cellars, and his speaking honors were canceled out.

The Truex portrayal was obviously consistent with the slant of the program. He was sentimental, floundering and pleasantly inept. But he was not the Caspar of Webster's cartoons, nor could he be, in this show. That person is truly a timid soul, with a frightening respect for any authority and a mind which takes any declaratory statement in its simplest literal sense. None of this was to be seen. Miss Field's Madge likewise followed the Truex pattern. Jack Hurdle's direction set a pace which was virtually non-existent. The idea of Caspar on TV still seems a good one in theory. It would be nice to see it worked out successfully. *Sam Chase.*

courtship and early life. These brief sequences were smoothly integrated and made up the best part of the show. Once the Emersons were brought up to date, the script lapsed into a stock anniversary situation, forgetful husband and all. Witty dialogue and fine performance by the principals almost obscured the antiquity of the plot but succeeding episodes may find it rough going if the writers don't come up with a few original ideas.

Acting was first-rate thruout, with Miss Francis giving a particularly outstanding performance. She actually sounded 10 years younger in the early sequences. Daughter Susan, tho, was a bit too precocious to be convincing. At times she sounded like a stray from the Faye-Harris show (i.e., "I want to grow up like Rita Hayworth and marry a man who's worth his weight in gold"). *June Bundy.*

Adventures of Johnny Lujack

Reviewed Monday (20)

Via ABC

Originated by WENR, Chicago

Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 5:30-6 p.m.

Producer-director, Kirby Hawkes. Owned by Andre-Creighton Productions. Cast: Johnny Lujack, Boris Aplon, Jack Bivans, Byron Keath, Art Fern. Announcer, Don Ward; organist, Marie Baldwin. Written by George Anderson.

Cast as a typical big brother always on hand to point out the difference between right and wrong, spouting moral platitudes at the drop of a cue, Johnny Lujack, famed college and pro football player, makes his radio debut with this new summer sustainer on the American Broadcasting Company. The show has failed to date because Lujack has yet to show he can handle a line with skill, and because the script has shown a naive which must be difficult for even the juvenile audience to swallow.

Most kids shows constantly have right conquering wrong. In this respect the Lujack show follows the pattern. But the new ABC show is worse than the run of the mill in its lack of plausibility during right's victories and by the overabundance of bromides.

In program reviewed the theme was: You have to use teamwork; you can't win all by yourself. To support this premise one of Lujack's long list of juvenile friends came close to being murdered by some auto thieves, and was saved only by the football player's omnipresence. At the climax there was plenty of fighting, and Lujack saved the day with a flying tackle. After he got up and brushed off his hands, nauseous philosophy spouted from his lips.

If this show is to succeed and garner a sponsor, it must use a more plausible script giving characters some semblance of normal, lifelike behavior. Solutions of conflict must not be too patent. And Lujack ought to take a few more dramatic lessons. *Cy Wagner.*

B-Bar-B Ranch

Reviewed Thursday (June 23), 5-5:30 p.m. (EDT). Sustaining over MBS, New York. Style—Juvenile. Producer, Herbert Rice; director, Bob Novak; writer, Peter Dixon; announcer, Bob Emerick. Cast: Ivan Cury (Bobby Benson), Craig McDonnell (Indian Harker), Charles Irving (Tex Mason). Sound effects, Jim Goode; music, Al Fanelli.

Lassoing a sponsor for this one should be a cinch. In spite of comic books and rocket ships, kids still go for good old-fashioned Western adventure, and this show is loaded with fast action and fancy gun play, yet wholesome enough to please the most exacting parent. Based on the old Bobby Benson series, which dates back to the 1930's, the *B-Bar-B Ranch* replaces the daytime *Straight Arrow* programs for the summer. The new Benson show features a complete story on each broadcast.

Good dialog, competent thesping and a well co-ordinated production kept last Thursday's (23) sage-brush drama galloping along at a brisk clip. The stock plot centered around a double-dealing attempt by a wealthy dude and a couple of local bad men to sabotage the Texas county's irrigation project. Justice inevitably triumphed tho, and Bobby Benson, a 12-year-old ranch owner, finally trapped the varmints. He did it with his little lariat.

Kicks for Kids

Bobby Benson, capably played by Ivan Cury, has an ageless appeal for

Leave It to the Girls

Reviewed Sunday (12), 8-8:30 p.m. (EDT). Style—Discussion. Sponsored over the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) by General Foods for Maxwell House Coffee via Benton & Bowles. Producer, Martha Rountree; director, Richard Goode; moderator, Maggi McNellis; regular panel members, Binnie Barnes, Florence Pritchett; guest panel members this show, Faye Emerson, Nancy Kelly, Paul Winchell.

This is an adaptation of the radio show of the same name and its adaptation to video adds little beyond permitting the viewers to gander some attractive females making like they're thinking. As in its AM predecessor, the airer consists mainly of taking the male of the species apart, and the panel members generally have their daintily manicured claws bared for all 30 minutes. Generally, a lone male is permitted on the show to present the masculine point of view; in this case, ventriloquist Paul Winchell had the aid of dummy Jerry Mahoney, so the odds were a little better.

Top panel member, beyond cavil, was Binnie Barnes, whose retorts cut sharper than a steak knife. Miss Barnes may be a pleasant as well as delectable person, but we'd rather take our chances with a buzzsaw after catching her caustic comments on this show. The other gals tried hard, but they seemed to strain in their efforts to be bitter and cynical; on Miss Barnes, it fit naturally. What's the matter, Miss B., don't you like us menfolk?

Barnes Quiperoos

To a request from some disgustingly naive female (who tagged herself "Constant Viewer") for a definition of love, Miss Barnes tartly advised the gal to go out and meet some guy, and that there are plenty of bars in town. To another female who asked what to do about her boy friend who is simply wonderful but knows it all too well, Miss Barnes suggested: "Land him, then give him hell." On the question of men shopping for their own clothes, she observed that since most males are helpless and must rely on their wives, there must be some sinister motive, and one not too hard to discern, in any yen for independent shopping.

The other gals on the panel did their best, but weren't up to this frank and colloquial style of expression. Winchell tossed in the towel early and relied mainly on his wooden stooge for comments, which soon took the form of admiring remarks about Faye Emerson's appearance. Maggie McNellis was a bit crisp as femsee, and could have made the show warmer with less forbidding style and by leaving the wise-cracks to the panel.

Commercials came midway in the show and at its conclusion, with film plugs used both times, and Miss McNellis pouring coffee to precede the first film. But that Binnie Barnes—she's carbolic! If the liquid form were as easy to take as hers, suicide would be a pleasure. *Sam Chase.*

small boys. They'll undoubtedly get a vicarious kick out of his matter-of-fact bravery and obvious superiority to most of the adults on the ranch, none of whom sounded too bright. A wheezy old character tagged Windy, who calls Bobby "little boss," and an Indian guide were among the low I.Q.'ers on Thursday's broadcast. The Injun's incredible dialect, i.e., "Him big crook—me knowum," may even prove too much for the youngsters. *June Bundy.*

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