

Murphy Takes Over CBS Prexy Post In Web's Crucial Hour

Network's Difficult Position Stems From Pressure to Reduce Rates

NEW YORK, March 15.—Adrian Murphy's move into the presidential post at the Columbia Broadcasting System's radio network comes at a crucial time in the web's history. Indications are growing that Procter & Gamble will decide against keeping "Beulah," Lowell Thomas and Jack Smith on the web. CBS is believed to have turned down a P&G request that it be charged daytime rates for the three shows which are programed between 6:45 and 7:30 p.m. Negotiations have reached so hot a boiling point that Frank Stanton, CBS president, is now conducting parleys with the advertiser in an effort to make an acceptable deal.

The most significant clue to the P&G attitude toward what is believed to be the CBS refusal came when P&G bought 9:30-10 a.m. across the board on the National Broadcasting Company's radio web (see other story, this depart-

ment). This move has been made, it is maintained in the trade, to back up the P&G ultimatum to CBS.

Opinion is that CBS is in a difficult situation. Should the network accede to the P&G demand, all its other large advertisers would probably descend upon it and ask for the same deal or one similar. Such pressure would be impossible to withstand if the P&G rate cut pitch becomes an accomplished fact. On the other hand, P&G is probably the single most important big network advertiser remaining in radio. Its business is vital to the preservation of a healthy CBS radio web.

Former CBS radio network president Howard Meighan meanwhile, has gone to Mexico to vacation. Now moved into a slot in the CBS Corporation where he will act as an administrator, Meighan's eight-month regime was not conspicuously successful. Several of his pet ideas including the "selective facilities plan" and the A&P super-merchandising scheme failed to catch the fancy of advertisers. The latter has met strong resistance by big sponsors, altho it still may find acceptance.

The big spending brand advertisers are said to feel that merchandising their products in the A&P, which markets competitive lines under the chain's own Ann Page label is not the most effective way to spend their dollars. The smaller advertisers haven't the kind of dough necessary to pay the bills.

PRECEDENT

Baptists To Sponsor Sportscast

LEXINGTON, Ky., March 15.—In a move to revive faith in the honesty of school sports, the Elkhorn Association of Kentucky Baptists last week signed to sponsor the State high school basketball championship broadcasts over WVLK here. Sale is believed to mark first time a church group has sponsored a straight sports broadcast. The four-day, 16-game series will take place at the University of Kentucky's Memorial Coliseum.

"We have faith in all of the young men playing for Kentucky's high schools," said the group's spokesman, Dr. T. J. Powers, "and we hope these broadcasts will help them resist certain temptations in the future." As for the commercials, Powers said, "if the biggest business leaders in the country can use sporting events to sell their products over the radio, there is no reason why we can't sell faith in God the same way." Theme for show will be "It's the church for you in '52."

Goodrich TV Show to CBS

NEW YORK, March 15.—The Columbia Broadcasting System's video programming department has taken over the production of "Celebrity Time." Package formerly was owned by World Video, but Goodrich, the sponsor, thru the Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn agency, has made a deal with the packager and has given responsibility for the show to CBS-TV.

CBS-TV has some new ideas for the program which it claims will improve its badly dented rating. Dick Lewine, producer of the program, probably will join the network and continue to handle the stanza.

ATCHER BALLY'S "RANCH" KINE

CHICAGO, March 15.—Just as motion picture stars make personal appearances in conjunction with the opening of a new flicker, so Bob Atcher, who heads the "Meadowgold Ranch" show seen here via WNBQ twice a week, will act as advance agent for the kinescope version of the show which will be seen in several new markets shortly.

This week Meadowgold sent Atcher to Omaha, and Ames and Davenport, Ia., where he made personal appearances in behalf of the show, plugging, as the programs will, Meadowgold ice cream. Foote, Cone & Belding is the agency.

"Howdy" TV, Radio Sells Quarter Hours

NEW YORK, March 15.—"Howdy Doody" this week had a 15-minute period sold on radio and another on TV. The AM bankroller is International Shoe, while Standard Brands is making a small scale return to TV with a quarter-hour buy on the kid show. Henri, Hurst & McDonald placed the International Shoe business, while Ted Bates placed the Standard Brands business.

The latter outfit was one of video's first big-time sponsors, but bowed out of its heavy commitments a few seasons ago. It is taking over the 5:45-6 p.m. TV slot Thursdays, starting March 20. International Shoe moves into the 9-9:15 a.m. Saturday radio period beginning March 22.

CONGRESS SHOULD SAY

Law Makes Radio Ask 'What Is a Candidate?'

By SAMUEL SPRING

Author of "Risks and Rights in Publishing, Television, Radio, Motion Pictures, Advertising and the Theater" (Norton, 1952). Mr. Spring is a member of the New York law firm of Spring & Eastman.

What is the meaning of the word "candidate" when a television or radio station is sued for defamatory statements uttered in a broadcast political speech? The correct answer, as Philadelphia's Westinghouse station recently found out, is perilously important to the station.

For a high Federal Court recently has ruled that when the chairman of a candidate's political committee, or the candidate's manager, makes a political speech, supporting the candidate, a greater liability as to defamation is imposed upon the station than exists when the candidate himself speaks. A trial judge ruled that the word "candidate" covered his manager and political committee chairman. But the trial judge was reversed by the higher court.

This odd distinction is the result of the obscure drafting of a vital section in the Federal Statute regulating the Federal Communications Commission. This short sec-

tion forbids a broadcasting station, at the peril of losing its FCC license, to censor any political speech by a "candidate." The section also provides that, if the station permits a "legally qualified candidate" to use a broadcasting station, the station shall "afford equal opportunities to all other candidates for that office." But the section adds that no obligation is imposed upon any licensee to "allow the use of its station" by any candidate.

Distinction Is Vital

As the law now stands, as interpreted by the Appellate Court, the prohibition against censoring (Continued on page 8)

HOUSE UNIT FCC SLASH

Budget-Cut May Clog TV-Thaw Expansion

WASHINGTON, March 15.—As the Federal Communications Commission continued its struggle to lift the TV freeze (see separate story), the House Appropriations Committee yesterday (14) threatened still another freeze-out by slashing the Commission's budget 32 per cent below the requested allocation for 1953. While the House is likely to go along with the Committee's axing, which would seriously stall the processing of TV applications once the FCC's current freeze is lifted, the Senate is figured sure to restore some of the money. However, in FCC quarters, it is estimated that anything less than complete restoration will jeopardize TV expansion in the early post-freeze era.

The Committee voted to allow the FCC only \$6,108,460—a reduction of \$1,966,540 in the budget request. In its report, the House group said it "appreciates the heavy work load now being carried by the Commission." But added, "However, under existing economic conditions, funds cannot be provided to increase appropriations for a peace-time agency,

Affiliates Expecting Revised NBC 'Plan'

Bannister Savvy, Regard for Station Seen Smoothing the Way for Acceptance

NEW YORK, March 15.—With Charles Denny, executive vice-president of the National Broadcasting Company on a European vacation, and the newly appointed vice-president in charge of station relations, Harry Bannister, ready to begin his job for the web April 14, NBC affiliates were anxiously debating whether or not Bannister would attempt to continue the web drive to persuade stations to accept the company's Economic Study Plan.

The fact is—and some high-echelon NBC executives guardedly admit it—that it would make little sense to bring in a man of Bannister's stature and tie him down to a plan which has met with such severe resistance on the part of so many of the web's important affiliates.

Instead, the probability is that Bannister, already quite familiar with the plan, and thoroly conversant with the key affiliates' opinions of its good and bad points, will work toward revisions. It is expected he will strive to retain those elements of the plan which the web considers vital to its own future, and at the same time eliminate phases to which affiliates objected most strongly.

The fact that NBC president Joe McConnell hired Bannister is taken by most affiliates as a firm indication that the web prexy is willing to make every effort to work with the affiliates. One of the most persistent demands upon McConnell on the part of the affiliates, at the NBC Boca Raton convention and since, has been for a man in the network with vast station-operations experience, and one for whom the affiliates had a high regard. Bannister fits these requirements completely.

Carleton Smith, in the meantime, this week was set to add important top-level manpower to the owned-and-operated radio and TV stations division of the web, working with the veepee in

charge of the o.&o.'s, Jim Gaines. Gaines' operation, by far the most profitable in the entire company, has been expanding in several important directions, and has sorely needed executive manpower of Smith's caliber.

Marx Repeats May Run as Summer Fare

NEW YORK, March 15.—The second TV show to consider airing films of past outings during the summer months is the Groucho Marx stanza on the National Broadcasting Company. Dinah Shore's NBC-TV show already has use of kinescopes under consideration.

Groucho's opus, which airs 8-8:30 p.m., Thursdays, for De Soto, is a film show to begin with, so there could be no deterioration of quality if films were re-run. Only question to be settled is with unions involved for payment to talent and crew for a second airing. If okayed, the radio version also would consist of repeats.

WGN-TV Hikes Film Library

CHICAGO, March 15.—Augmenting its already extensive TV film library, WGN-TV this week acquired exclusive local rights to several hundred more feature and Western pictures, and will start programing the additions within two weeks. Contract, one of the largest ever signed by a TV station, was set with Motion Pictures for Television, Inc., New York.

Included in the package are such titles as "Open City," "Paisan," "The Battle," "On Approval," and "Over the Rainbow" a full-length animated feature. Also included were several films in the Philo Vance, Charlie Chan, Joe Palooka and Gabby Hayes series.

CBS Net Gets TV Bible Seg

NEW YORK, March 15.—The Columbia Broadcasting System this week lured the TV version of "The Greatest Story Ever Told" away from the American Broadcasting Company. The Goodyear-sponsored Biblical series will be seen on film three times—April 27, May 25 and June 22—in the 4:30-5 Sunday afternoon slot, replacing the CBS-TV "Workshop" on those afternoons.

The series is not being programed regularly on TV this season, it will be shown weekly next season. CBS-TV, naturally, hopes to get the account then, and also would like to lure the AM billings away from ABC. Kudner is the agency.

Brenner Exits Coast FCC Job

HOLLYWOOD, March 15.—Federal Communications Commission's Western regional attorney, Joseph Brenner, this week resigned the post he's held for four years to go into private law practice in Beverly Hills with S. V. C. Prichard. New firm will be known as Prichard & Brenner.

A former attorney with the U. S. Department of Justice in Washington, Brenner's service in the Commission has included positions as acting chief of the rate section and as a hearing examiner. He is a veteran of many Western radio and television hearings. His re-entry into private practice represents the resumption of a practice interrupted at the outbreak of World War II, when he was called to Washington on appointment with the special war policies unit of the Department of Justice.

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