

BAND FOR TELEVISION DEBATED AS POLICY

Decision to Permit Broadcast- ing Rests With Radio Commission.

USE SO FAR IS LIMITED

By LYNNE M. LAMM.

There is a serious question as to whether television should be permitted in the broadcast band, even though it be accomplished within the present 10-kilocycle separation between channels. This is a question more of policy than of law, however, and its decision will rest with the Federal Radio Commission. In fact, the matter has already come before the commission in an individual case.

The international radiotelegraph convention of 1927 devotes a band to broadcasting and defines broadcasting as "radiotelephone communications intended to be received by the public." "Radiotelephone" does not include television, in the opinion of legal experts of the commission.

It is true that any nation, even though a party to the treaty, may use the broadcast band for other purposes if interference is not caused across international boundary lines, but this means a very serious limitation on power used for any other such purposes. Furthermore, it is not clear that the use of the broadcast channel for television would meet the test of public interest, convenience or necessity, since very few people have receiving sets equipped to receive television, and for them such a use would mean a waste of a valuable channel, in the opinion of experts of the commission.

Development Not Impeded.

The law does not stand in the way of the development of television, for it may be assigned to other frequencies outside the broadcast band, presumably in the short waves below 200 meters.

The question has been put up to the commission: "Does transmission of television on a channel in the broadcast band meet the test of public interest, convenience or necessity?"

In an individual case, it has been suggested by the legal experts of the commission that after January 1, 1929, no station should be permitted to transmit television in the broadcasting band unless it is certain that no interference with any service of another country will result.

In this particular case on which the commission was asked for an opinion, the broadcasting station had a license to operate on a frequency on the broadcast band, and it proposed to use a portion of its time to the transmission of television. According to the facts presented, the transmission will affect only the normal 10 kilocycle band of frequencies and will take place during very limited portions of each day.

Not for Ordinary Sets.

The ordinary receiving set will be unable to receive this television and will give forth only various kinds of squeaks and noises when tuned to the frequency, unless equipped with a special apparatus.

It is pointed out that heretofore the band of frequencies from 550 to 1,500 kilocycles has been assigned to broadcasting, and this was also the action of the International Convention. Because of this convention, it is the contention that, therefore, the commission should not permit any form of radio communication in what is popularly known as the broadcast band.

One of the questions involved in the case before the commission was whether the radio transmission of television is "broadcasting." This question is linked up with the International Convention, because it is pointed out that in the general regulations of the convention, television was not included in the definition of "broadcasting." It is contended that the commission has full power to adopt a definition of a "broadcasting station" which either would, or would not, include television.

The query was also raised in the case in question, as to whether a communication which, in the present state of affairs can be received by only a few persons, is "intended to be received by the public," within the meaning of the regulations of the international convention.

Favor Trying It Experimentally.

The consensus at the commission seems to be that it should allow, temporarily, television transmission on the broadcast band. The only question which seemed necessary to determine was whether, under this heading, this permission would meet the standard of "public interest, convenience or necessity" imposed by the radio act of 1927.

The considerations involved are the fact that only a comparatively few persons will get the benefit of such transmission, while an infinitely large number of others, equipped to receive audible programs only, will be deprived of the use of the channel temporarily and will receive only unpleasant and disagreeable noises.

No decision has yet been reached by the commission in this particular case, but information is reaching the commission indicating that a number of broadcasting stations are using the broadcast band for brief experimental operation of picture transmission and television broadcasting. It will therefore, in the very near future, be up to the commission to adopt a policy in connection with the broadcasting of television.

The commission recognizes the great potentialities of visual broadcasting and the probability of a large development in these fields in the near future. The commission is desirous, too, to determine the status of public opinion with respect to visual broadcasting; that is, whether the public desires to see the applications of television and picture transmission developed.