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Television Slow-Up

You Won't Get a New Set for Year or More; Shortages Are Blamed

Radio Will Get First Choice Of Materials; FCC Delays Action on Applications

Must Devise Network System

BY JOSEPH M. GUILFOYLE

Television men are reluctantly rewriting the timetable which will determine when most Americans may expect to have sight-and-sound radio.

They realize now that they were too optimistic and won't be able to live up to previous predictions. Television was expected to move into high gear soon after the end of the war. Instead, the industry today is bogged down by a shortage of materials and parts for receiving and transmitting equipment.

Here's the latest schedule on when the majority of Americans can reasonably hope to see as well as hear their favorite comedians from the comfort of their living room chairs:

If you live in one of the six cities which now have telecasting stations—New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington, Schenectady, N. Y., and Los Angeles—and don't own one of the 7,500 sets now in use, it will be late 1946 or early 1947 before you'll be able to buy a receiving set.

If you're living outside these six cities, it will be anywhere from 1948 to 1950, at least, before you'll have television. That's how long it is expected to take to install telecasting facilities in most of the major cities.

"If television expands beyond the present six cities where it is now available by the latter part of 1947, I'll be very much surprised," says Allen B. DuMont, president of the Allen B. DuMont Laboratories, Inc.

lines are started. Radio makers don't want to bother with such problems now.

The outlook for transmitters—there can't be any new telecasting stations without them is even less promising. It's so hard to get such things as steel for towers and copper for coils and conductors, that manufacturers will make no promises on deliveries.

Frank M. Folsom, vice president of the RCA Victor division of the Radio Corp. of America, says: "No new television transmitting equipment will be available in less than a year." Mr. DuMont is even more pessimistic. He predicts it will be at least 18 months before any new transmitters are installed.

New Stations in 1948

It probably will be some time in 1948 before these new television stations go on the air. Usually about six months elapse from the time a transmitter is delivered until it's put into commercial operation—it takes that long to erect transmitter towers and make field tests.

Also slowing this infant industry, sometimes called "the average man's magic carpet," is the Federal Communications Commission's delay in acting upon some 160 applications for commercial television licenses now before it. No prospective telecaster wants to order transmitters or other equipment until his application has been approved. This may take several months, some men in the industry believe.

By that time, some of these applicants may decide to delay studio construction because present day costs are so high. Even at its cheapest, television is not a poor man's business. For instance, a first class station for use in a major city cost close to \$260,000 before the war. Today, the cost is estimated closer to \$340,000. What it will be six months from now no one knows. That price would cover a station equipped to transmit studio entertainment, motion pictures and spot field events.

The outlay in smaller cities, while substantial, would not be as great because not all those facilities are required.

Other Problems Face Industry

Other problems, too, must be solved before this new art will be available to anyone who can afford to buy a receiver.

Some method of linking distant cities, similar to the networks now used by sound broadcasters, will have to be developed. Without such a network, the cost of programming and operating telecasting stations in smaller cities and towns would be prohibitive. As in sound radio, these smaller stations will have to depend on the networks for their big programs.

When these networks will be established is

Calls Ballyhoo "Unrealistic"

The prediction that probably only 20 cities will have television in five years is made by Dorman D. Israel, vice president in charge of engineering for the Emerson Radio & Phonograph Corp. Mr. Israel says the wartime ballyhoo of television was "unrealistic."

The biggest factor now stunting the growth of television is the absence of any new receiving sets. The Allen B. DuMont Laboratories, for instance, had expected to put television receivers on the market in time for Christmas. Now, says Mr. DuMont, "it will be the latter part of 1946 before they'll be available and that's on the assumption that the Office of Price Administration is eliminated and labor conditions improve."

Emerson officials think it may be early 1947 before any quantity of sight-and-sound sets are available to the public.

Other leading receiving set manufacturers agree with these predictions.

The production of television receivers is stalled just as radio production is by the lack of parts. A television receiver, like a sound radio, uses condensers, loudspeakers and cabinets. Output of these vital parts is nearly at a standstill because, their makers say O.P.A. ceiling prices are too low for profitable operations.

Radios Will Get First Parts

But even when these materials become available again, say manufacturers, they'll go into sound radios, not television receivers. Here's why:

1. There is a ready market for at least 25 million sound radios now. Since they can be made with the least delay, manufacturers say they'll concentrate on filling this demand before diverting any materials to television assembly lines.

2. Television sets, far much more intricate than radios, have not yet been made on a mass production basis. It will take time to iron out bugs likely to develop when assembly

still the industry's \$64 question. It could be five years, maybe longer, say telecasters. Right now the industry isn't even sure how it will be done.

Three ways have been proposed: The coaxial cable, radio relay stations and the stratovision plane.

A coaxial cable is a copper tube as large as a lead pencil with a heavy copper wire suspended inside. It can conduct 480 simultaneous phone conversations or a single television program.

The radio relay system consists of sending and receiving units placed atop 200-foot towers spaced across the country about every 30 miles.

Under the stratovision system, planes circling 30,000 feet above the ground would pick up television broadcasts and rebroadcast them over a 400-mile area.

Cable From New York to Washington

At the moment, the Bell System is completing a coaxial cable between New York and Washington, and similar cables are under construction between other large cities. By the end of the year it is expected there will be about 1,500 miles of this cable in the ground. An experimental radio relay system between New York and Boston probably will be completed early next year.

Meantime, television programming has lagged far behind the industry's technical advances. With exception of sports programs, such as prize fights and the football games, few televised programs have been able to hold the attention of the audience, most telecasters believe. They point out that programs lack variety and are poorly presented.

Responsible for this is the fact that up to now television has been limping along on a limited budget. It just couldn't afford to pay the kind of money necessary to attract top-flight radio, stage and screen players. Moreover, there are few producers in television today who have been specially trained for their jobs.

But the industry is very much aware of these shortcomings.