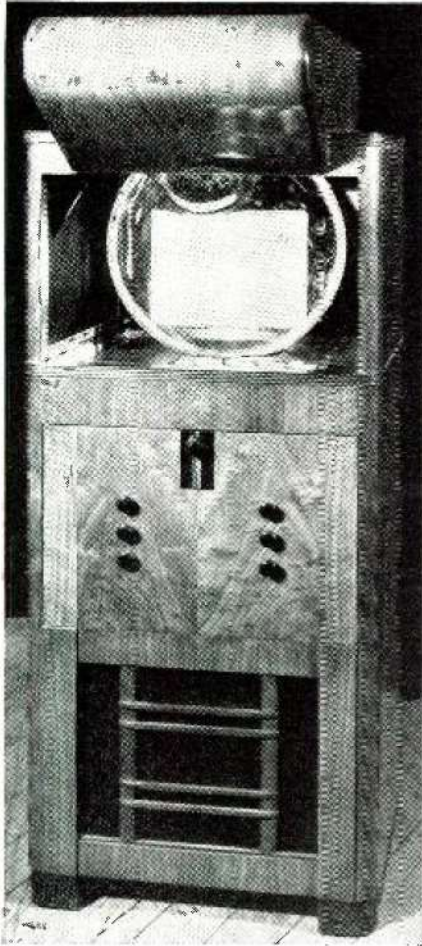


**W**HAT about sponsored telecasts? That's a question men in the industry have constantly avoided answering because it represents a sensitive phase of the new art's development.

It's not a sensitive topic, though, because they wish it to be. Rather, it's because they hesitate to be so bold as to assert themselves on commercial programs before the FCC has done something officially about removing television from the experimental classification it is now hampered by.

Telecasters, like manufacturers, make no bones about the fact that television will eventually have to be supported by advertising fees just as radio broadcasting has been for almost since its inception.



Something a little different in receivers, the RCA "Flask" television.

One of the chief obstacles in television's progress is the lack of funds to carry on extensive program schedules which, regardless of caliber, are experimental in the eyes of the FCC and therefore can't produce any revenue. Why not have commercial programs right now?

True, sponsors won't be too eager to spend sums anywhere near what they are spending on sound broadcasts. The very small number of television sets in use gives video advertising a very small circulation, indeed. But it's distinctly a class circulation and, with sponsors paying at least part of the cost of program production, the presentations could be made consist-

# The VIDEO Reporter

by SAMUEL KAUFMAN

ently better and would in themselves be instrumental in selling receivers and increasing the potential audience.

We've heard it said that some financial aid from the Government would be welcomed by television interests. After all telecasters are not philanthropists and, even though they're building program services that will probably bring substantial profits in the future, it can't be expected that they can provide free programs for an indefinite period. And that, perhaps, is the chief reason experimental stations outside of the New York area are not any too eager to rush into regularly-scheduled programs. Once they start such a service, it's difficult to stop without injuring the good-will they originally set out to obtain.

The New York set up is not a typical one because the first regularly-scheduled video service launched last spring by NBC also assists the network's parent firm—the Radio Corporation of America—in selling television receivers. So, to an extent, NBC is helping its parent if not itself. But, at the very same time, W2XBS is of equal value to other makers of video equipment who bear no part of the television program expense.

ment—in both equipment and programs. But there's still no reason to shelve the idea of sponsored programs which would actually help bringing on sooner the desired gains in the industry.

**T**HE suspension of television program service in London has brought about quite a few problems to the trade and public alike.

The average Britisher is a very patriotic fellow, indeed, and, judging by the high standard of character the *Video Reporter* observed in Englishmen he met here and abroad, the elimination of television programs should be a very easy thing for them to accept in time of war. And we believe this holds true in the majority of cases despite the fact that each home television receiver represents a fairly substantial investment on which no entertainment return can be expected until telecasting once again resumes from Alexandra Palace.

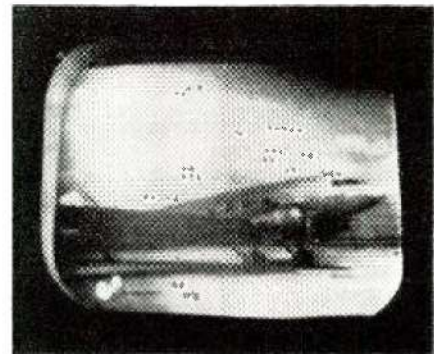
Video sets purchased on the installment plan, though, have brought up the problem of whether purchasers must continue payments when the receivers are no longer serviceable. But inasmuch as the fault for the ab-



Telecasts of football games were quite common this fall from NBC.

In England, television programs reached a very high level through a Government appropriation. But, of course, the money actually comes from the license fees paid by listeners. Television, like radio, is tax-free in this country and permits for competitive privately-operated services. Hence, television should be given the identical opportunity of being self-supporting.

Granting television stations to be commercial right at the start won't be doing things prematurely. Unlike other brand new industries, television has grown up considerably in the laboratory before it was let loose publicly. It certainly has lots to learn and there's plenty of room for improve-



The airliner telecast from the ground was received in the plane.

sence of programs lies beyond the jurisdiction of the manufacturers and dealers, it seems that the purchasers (Please turn to page 49)

## Video Reporter

(Continued from page 33)

will have to continue their payments according to original agreements.

Manufacturers, too, are bearing their share of television investment that must remain dormant until telecasting starts anew. It is understood that the set makers were reaching an advanced production stage when the video market snapped completely and the completed models on hand must remain on hand with no financial return in sight, perhaps, until the war is over.

The suggestion has been made that a skeleton program service be presented to ease the situation for dealers who have many sets sold on the installment plan.

**W**E are in receipt of an exceptionally attractive promotional booklet entitled *Television for Everybody* published in England for distribution through trade channels as part of an intelligent video merchandising campaign. Unfortunately, the suspension of television programs in London has delayed trade progress, but the high initiative reflected in the merchandising of video receivers indicates that the British manufacturers will quickly catch up on their selling once the programs are resumed.

The booklet plays up in words and pictures the vast scope of material available from Alexandra Palace. Particularly impressive from the trade angle are the clever advertising lines of set makers. Here are a few samples:

"Worth looking into."  
 "You can't shut your eyes to it."  
 "Look into it now."  
 "You can see the difference—"  
 "Clearly the best!"

**T**HE twentieth anniversary of the *Radio Corporation of America* was the occasion of a television stunt that achieved one of the best newspaper publicity breaks to date. But it was a stunt that, clever as it was, won't do much to advance the art of sight transmission beyond the exploitation results achieved in getting television in the headlines.

Flying in a United Air Lines plane in the stratosphere 200 miles south of New York, a group of *NBC* technicians and New York journalists saw and heard David Sarnoff, *RCA* president, and W. A. Patterson, president of *United Air Lines*, as they conversed before a *Radio City* iconoscope. To achieve television reception in the plane this great video distance from New York, a flying height of 21,600 feet had to be reached to keep in a line-of-sight position with the *Empire State Building* transmitting antenna.

An interesting highlight of the stunt was the manner in which the plane's occupants were able to watch their own ship land at *North Beach Airport*. *NBC* had dispatched its mobile television unit to the airport and the passengers had the rare thrill of seeing the manner in which their plane approached the field and landed.

All indications point to a long series of television stunting. The quest of publicity was true of radio's early days and it is true of television today. The real stunting stage will first start

when *CBS* starts telecasting in the New York area. It takes competition to bring out the best—or worst—of stunt ideas. And the desire to register with the public with all sorts of stunts as long as they are "firsts" is considered a trait of good showmanship.

An important thing to consider, though, is "Will such stunts sell television sets?"

**S**HERMAN GREGORY, general manager of *KDKA*, Pittsburgh, recently told us of the enthusiastic reception accorded *KDKA's Temple of Television* at the *Allegheny County Free Fair*.

The demonstration consisting of an *RCA* "jeep" transmitter and sixteen receivers drew the attention of over 1,000,000 persons during a seven-day run.

Pittsburgh went wild over television and this enthusiasm has been duplicated in other big cities where "jeep" demonstrations have been held.

All of which points to the fact that the public wants television. But in view of the disappointing number of receivers sold in the New York area during the first half-year of regularly scheduled television programs, what chances are there for smaller cities?

For our own answer to that question, we must reiterate our stand that set prices are too high—much too high—for mass sales. Lower prices, plus better merchandising, would put television on the map in the New York area in no time at all. And we are basing our opinion on the skeleton type of program schedule now available. When the second and third New York stations start operating, the video art could reach boom proportions that would stimulate the launching of regular services in other American cities.

**A**S a service to television set owners in the New York area serviced by Station *W2XBS*, *NBC* has launched the distribution of a free weekly schedule. The printed piece lists each week's video presentations in detail and, in addition, contains a questionnaire to obtain the viewers' comments on the programs.

Distribution of the weekly program cards should prove invaluable to *NBC* in many ways. Aside from the goodwill angle and the promotional merits involved, the network can compile a fairly complete list of television set owners and, in time, this data can represent a strong selling point for the network when it pursues television sponsors. The cards, an *NBC* spokesman tells us, will be offered at frequent intervals during telecasts.

*W2XBS* is attaching great importance to the public's comment on these early telecasts. And that is as it should be. But it seems that more specific criticism should be invited than the simple checking arrangement under the questionnaire headings of "excellent," "good," "fair" and "poor." *NBC* should prompt reasons for their opinions, not merely the opinions themselves.

*CBS* executives haven't got much to say these days on television topics. The long-anticipated launching of *W2XAX* atop the *Chrysler Building* is still being delayed at the time these lines are written and one network spokesman says it's pretty certain that it won't be until January, 1940. —50—



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