

# THE VIDEO REPORTER

by Samuel Kaufman

IT'S been customary for each item in the *Video Reporter* column to begin with a big capital letter. That's the make-up style of this magazine and it's a thing we've become accustomed to. Yet, looking back at the column in the January issue, it suddenly dawned on us that the first two items, leading off as usual with big initials, told an unintentional exclamatory story. The first item had a big black "A" and the second one had a large ebony "W". Put them together at a single glance and they spell "Aw!"

Now the word "Aw!" is an exclamation that may, at this point, call for an explanation. That is, an explanation of why it stood out so boldly to our eyes.

Well, the answer is simple. We believe that the expression just about sums up our opinion of television's progress in 1940.

When 1940 made its exit, it was not merely the end of a year. It was also the end of a decade. Further, it was the end of radio's second decade. So it was an important milestone.

It was a year of great promise for television and it was a promise that was *unfulfilled*. But, mind you, it was not a broken promise. But somehow, it's taking more time than anticipated for commercial sight-and-sound broadcasting to gain a foothold. The only consolation is that the trade and industry did its part in furthering things. The main hurdle too difficult to clear in 1940 was winning the confidence of the *Federal Communications Commission* to the point of getting a commercial grant for video stations. But there was delay, delay and more delay, until an entire year passed. And, it must be added that disputes over standards and frequencies in the trade itself was a hampering factor and that this point alone was sufficient for the *FCC* to demand a delay.

**A**CTUALLY, as 1941 came tearing around the bend, the signal of the video industry seemed to be full speed ahead. But it was still on a single track course which meant limited speed in progress. But progress was obvious. Even the *FCC* action in requesting a delay to iron out standards may prove constructive in the long run.

The most disillusioning thing of the video industry's status as 1940 bowed out was a lackadaisical attitude prevailing in network offices regarding television. Even where there were great fires of enthusiasm in previous months, there was barely a spark in December and early January. And it seems that the only reason they cared to nurse the spark along was that a great investment was represented in getting it started and that no one cares to put up great sums of money for enthusiasm flint until there are signs of early commercial profit.

**T**AKE the network, for example, where the greatest amount of television ballyhoo to date originated. Mention the word "television" around its offices today and there's a look of sadness rather than one of enthusiasm. It seems as if something is being mourned rather than sponsored. But the lads in the network's office declare that the lack of spirit is not their fault but that everything must await the action of the *National Television Systems Committee* and the more important reaction of the *FCC* before anything constructive can really be started or resumed.

Skeleton staffs and skeleton programs are maintained where even a year before the network was going at things in a big way on a big budget. And when you deal with skeletons you deal with decay and, unless something comes along quickly to yank the video spirit out of the doldrums, it will bring television to the paradoxical state of being deca-

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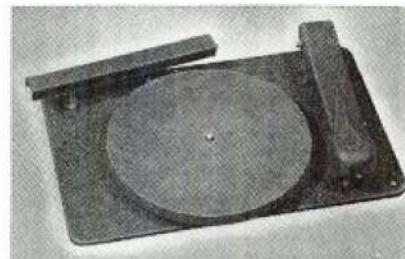
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