

THE VIDEO REPORTER

by Samuel Kaufman

DESPITE the shortage of materials radio manufacturers are being forced to cope with during the extensive national defense program, there is every reason to believe that television will be off to a full commercial start at an early date—probably by the time you read these lines.

The Federal Communications Commission, impatient aplenty over the way in which certain holders of experimental video licenses weakened at the thought of early commercialization after earlier enthusiasm, is about to let the television industry (if it can be called that as yet) cut loose with full commercial privileges. This action would embody permission to sell television time to advertisers.

Such FCC action is presaged largely by the manner in which even the reluctant video participants have been coming to the fore with public statements to prove that they are not asleep on television progress, even though they may, at present, favor a delay in full commercialization.

After tremendous investments in early television experiments and equipment—and very extensive promotional and ballyhoo expenditures—it may seem odd to see the video lads pull in their horns. But, now, it seems that even if they're pulling in their trumpets, they're still sounding the call to advance.

What surprises us no end is the apparent action of some television participants to drag red herrings across their announcements of video plans and progress. It seems that such actions are bids for time, time and more time before commercialization is sanctioned. The radio public can't be kidded, however. There is no reason why the plans of many television companies—as well as the desires of potential look-and-listeners—cannot be carried out. If the technically-informed listener is willing to gamble on investment in home equipment, the desires of a few companies to hold up the whole works pending acceptance of their standards should be dealt with fairly and squarely—but just as fairly and squarely in respect to the views of others.

In the *Video Reporter's* mind, commercialization now should be given full release, but there should be no attempt to misinform the set-buying public on the myth that television has reached the height of perfection and that standards will remain unchanged.

No one can be certain that standards will remain unaltered in years to come. Regardless of any ruling or conditions to the contrary, a major technical advancement in the future will knock the stilts out of any set of standards accepted now.

Does this uncertainty then imply that television should remain shelved in the laboratory until standards can be guaranteed? Of course not! No other industry we can recall was ever hampered by such reasoning. Radio itself had its standards changed and re-changed and yet it grew to a mighty and powerful trade.

Just let the trade and public get a crack at commercial television and watch the new art leap forward!

WE'VE spoken before of the manner in which the New York RCA-NBC television station leaned towards sports programs. And it was our deduction that the reason such outside pickups were favored over studio presentations was that the production cost was more favorable. And if you want to know why the production cost was less, it's because there were no talent charges at all. The only expense was for the technical and directional crew on the scene of the ball game, prize fight, wrestling match or other form of athletic competition.

Ah! But now we find there's another angle. We hear the RCA-NBC lads, enterprising fellows that they are, feel that it will be a long, long time before profits can be realized on the business of telecasting. And they're probably right! But they now seem to be flirting with the idea of sending "wired" television programs to theatres. With RCA-equipped auditoriums in the metropolitan area having exclusive video reception facilities for Madison Square Garden prize fights, for example, an immediate flow of dollars into the Radio City till may be assured.

Now everyone knows that the idea of theatre television isn't new. Before the war, Baird was using the idea on a widespread basis in England and undoubtedly was on the way to good-sized revenue when the service ceased. And U. A. Sanabria, a young Chicago experimenter, startled New York in 1930 with theatre-sized images. *Scophony*, like Baird's, a British enterprise, has shown its theatre television in New York. And, we mustn't forget that the Baird firm itself, through its affiliate *British Gaumont* pictures, went to town (New York, too, of course!) with its auditorium-sized television system.

However, it took RCA, through the reason of its size, importance and weight to open industry eyes as to the potentialities of "paid-admission" television.

RCA, you know, is no newcomer to the show business. It had loads to do with the formation of R-K-O theatres and pictures



Exhibition baseball game being tele-vised from Ebbets Field, Brooklyn, N.Y. Televising at top; tele-trailer below.

and its present investments in sound movie production are tremendous.

Hence, it must know what it's doing in theatre television promotion. But any implication that home television must be shelved until after the commercialization of theatre television is silly.

The *Video Reporter* believes that there is a future for both types of television but that they should be separate and distinct things and neither one should be permitted to advance at the expense of the other. Or, if one *must* come out on the short end, public service would be best catered to if the long end went to home television.

THE National Television Systems Committee has gone its way. Having served its usefulness in an effort to demonstrate to the Federal Communications Commission just how advanced—or retarded—television really is, the NTSC is now out of existence and, according to an announcement by the Radio Manufacturers Association, original sponsor of the NTSC, "commercialization and future engineering work in connection with television standardization has been transferred and will be continued by the RMA Engineering Department."

It must be noted that the NTSC did a re-
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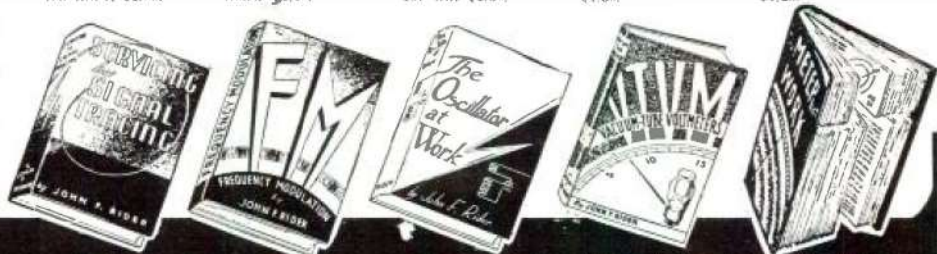
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BROTHER LOUIS J. KLEINKLAUS, *GST-CTU-Mardis*, advises us that a bill, *H. R. 2662*, fathered by Congressman Dirksen proposes sweeping changes in the method of hiring of seamen, the outlawing of strikes, the "control" of subversive literature on shipboard, and many other departures hard to envision . . . Radios come into the bill in the last paragraph which would amend the *Communications Act of 1934* as amended, providing that licenses of radiops shall be revoked for various minor offenses, instead of the suspension that now prevails. In addition, the proposal states that all outstanding licenses "when the bill is enacted" shall be cancelled within 180 days. The bill does not go on to say what takes place from there on. We are left to the conclusion that the *Communications Commission* can either renew those they wish, refuse to renew others, or require the re-examination of all license holders, or the production of certain specified evidences.

But in spite of these sharp proposals it is believed that the bill is aimed primarily at the ridding of the marine industry of subversive activity. There is the indication that a showdown is near between the totalitarian groups disguised as unions and the government. Since the party line changed prior to the last Presidential election, all opposition possible has been placed in front of every government project, no matter what its scope or object. And now that Washington has embarked on a definite course of action, it is believed that a real fight is soon to be witnessed . . . the government coming out on top, you betcha. And so another bill against subversive activity in the American Merchant Marine . . . seems like it all can't be but scuttle-butt. We hope one of these bills go thru. P.D.Q.

IT'S a lie, a dastardly unwarranted lie to even think that Brother Walter Broomall had joined a stevedore union. Although he was seen toting fifty-pound sacks of sugar along a dock, he has an explanation. It seems that Broomy met up with a couple of British ship officers and after a few sociable Zombies he learned, to his horror, that along with torpedoes, mines, bombs and other missiles tossed by the playful Nazis, his British friends had to put up with a shortage of sugar for their tea. Another tea party, sez you, but this was vicky verky, as the saying goes.

Since Broomy's boat was docked at a sugar refinery, literally surrounded with mountains of sugar, the irony of this situation bit deep into his sensitive soul, and after a few more Zombies he decided that something should be done about it. A "Bundles for Britain" movement was inaugurated on the spot. The refinery manager entered enthusiastically into the scheme after Broomy, the bartender, the oiler of a Latvian ship, a barge captain, two small boys and somebody's dog visited him in his office and talked quietly but firmly to him for a couple of hours. Not content with inaugurating the movement, Broomy saw it thru by personally carrying the sugar aboard the Britisher in spite of a heavy rain. She sailed next day on her weary, dangerous way with supplies for her fighting people. And we are happy to think that no matter what happens to her, Broomy saw to it that there would be a good cup of tea waiting for her men when the fight was finished.

FRED FISH, ex-radiop Nyvy, now editor *Naty Neas*, is in the dumps. All of his old shipmates are back in the service, drawing down plenty of what-it-takes, base pay, rent allowance, ration allowance, etc., with plenty of time off, and he is chained to his desk working like a Trojan. Fred doesn't like it, thinks there is no justice and will rectify matters as soon as he can tear himself away from his work. Which we doubt. Because an editor, as a general rule, grins, growls and groans after every dead-line but loves the work, just the same. So as even you and me . . . So keep the home fires banked, your flintlock dry and the bore-sight clean 'cause we may be goin' places and ringin' door bells. And with a cheer . . . 73 . . . ge . . . GY.

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markable job of "boiling down" the technical video situation. What seemed a hopeless task emerged as a job well done. True, not all the wrinkles were ironed out and matters between television competitors have not quite passed the *sotto voce* name-calling stage. But, at least, there isn't as much fist-shaking in the industry as once existed.

More than 160 technical experts participated in the studies and discussions of the various NTSC panels. No single firm could possibly have employed this array of radio engineering talent.

It is obvious that many of these experts were bound to the policies of the companies they represented and couldn't come around to accepting competitors' views even when they may have been more logical. And, perhaps, they can hardly be criticized for that.

Even though NTSC is a thing of the past, it is gratifying to know that at least part of its scope will remain alive under the *RMA* engineering banner.

THE New Deal's promotional facilities embrace, in some observers' minds, crackerjack examples of showmanship. And the *Federal Communications Commission* gets its full share of ballyhoo spotlighting.

In an effort to let enquirers know what makes radio tick, the *FCC*, via the *U. S. Government Printing Office*, is distributing a booklet entitled "Radio—A Public Primer." And it is apparent that the thing that interested the Video Reporter most in this industrial "ABC" was the chapter on television.

Here, in simple outline, is an elementary outline of television in the U.S.A. and, for capsule education, it is an interesting job. Technical experts may find some fault with such a rationalizing description of television transmission as the following quoted example:

"The scene in the television studio or elsewhere is photographed by a camera and the accompanying sound is recorded by a microphone. The camera is equipped with a special vacuum tube which changes the image into a series of electrical impulses."

But it must be agreed that, in a nutshell, it tells the story satisfactorily for the lay mind.

WHAT has happened to all the video receivers that were proudly displayed and demonstrated in prominent New York department, radio and furniture stores not so long ago?

Everyone concerned doesn't seem eager to talk about the topic. One thing is certain: the sets weren't all sold. Undoubtedly the bulk of them went back to manufacturers' warehouses. In all, due to the short-lived "regular" television program schedule, retailers are not too keen about this thing called television. And it's all due to their past experience.

Dealers like to handle lines that move. Display space is at a premium in busy shops and it is important to cash in on every inch. True, television demonstrations attracted some persons into the stores and getting a potential buyer into the shop—even if he doesn't buy anything immediately—is not to be sneezed at.

But, when television programs suddenly ceased and then resumed on a schedule that was only a ghost of its former self, those curiosity seekers—and certainly the dealers, too—can't be too keen about the whole thing.

As a result, even when the *FCC* sanctions commercial television—and when the manufacturing industry wholeheartedly supports it, there's a tremendous job ahead in arousing the interest of the prospective purchaser and the dealer who both feel that television once let them down.

Hence, it is essential that a unified industry campaign be put behind video receivers when they hit the market in volume.



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