

COLOR TELEVISION AGAIN UNDER STUDY

Hearings Resume Tomorrow Before F. C. C. on Standards for 3 Proposed Systems

A new round in the color television controversy opens tomorrow with the industry stirred to its depths and the public surprisingly calm about it all. The public has continued buying sets by the tens of thousands each week, apparently with this reasoning:

1. Color is yet a long way off.
2. If it does come soon, you can convert your set at moderate cost.

Aside from the three companies whose color systems are under consideration by the Federal Communications Commission, the great majority in the industry contend color isn't ready yet. As to when it will be, the Radio Manufacturers Association, whose members build four-fifths of the nation's sets, declares; "No one can say with any certainty, but obviously not for considerable time." Television pioneer Allen B. Dumont says "ten to twenty years."

As for the cost of converters, the Columbia Broadcasting System says they could be made for as little as \$50, if its method is adopted. But color telecasts on the CBS system couldn't be received in any form—even in black and white—on present sets without alteration.

The Radio Corporation of America concedes color converters for its system would cost considerably more to begin with. And Color Television, Inc., which has the third system, doesn't even propose to convert present sets to color. But both RCA and CTI say their color telecasts could be received on present sets—without any alteration whatever—as black and white pictures.

Movie Example Cited

All three are in general agreement that we will have a lot of black and white telecasts for some time to come. And the RMA contends there may never be a complete switch to color, pointing out that although it has been years since the advent of color in the movies, 85 per cent of the films still are in black and white.

Set makers had feared the controversy over color video would cause prospective customers to hold off buying under the misapprehension that rainbow-hued pictures were just around the corner. Instead, most manufacturers report they're still behind on orders in the sales boom that has been going since Labor Day and is keeping the industry well ahead of 1949's billion-dollar pace.

But the arguments will flare anew in Washington tomorrow when the FCC resumes its color television hearings—in recess since late November. On Thursday, the commission will view comparative demonstrations in its laboratories at Laurel, Md., of the CBS, RCA and CTI systems. Other color systems have been proposed, but the developers do not yet have equipment ready to show how they work.

Concerned With Standards

The commission is concerned primarily not with any particular company's claims but rather with trying to work out standards that would permit color television as soon as possible, and at the same time provide room for future improvements.

Once it sets standards, they will remain set for a long time. To change them later would be like changing the standard for the width of railroad track—equipment in use at that time would be made obsolete.

Laymen who have seen the CBS color telecasts are impressed with the fidelity of color reproduction. And some technical experts concede it's a cheap and simple way to get color video now. But it gives

fewer lines per picture and fewer pictures per second than black and white television—less detail or definition—which CBS says is compensated for by the color effect.

RCA contends its system gives the same definition as black and white television, that it will produce pictures of unlimited size, and that it will permit later improvements. It is all-electronic with no moving parts.

CTI contends its system is simpler and more practical than that of RCA, has the color fidelity of the CBS method, is also all-electronic.

All three systems send the electronic equivalents of three separate images for each color—one each in red, green and blue. The actual color is added inside the set after the electronic impulses have been translated back to light.

In the anti-color camp, the argument is that none of the three systems is ready yet.