

C. B. S. Jettisons Monopoly On Color Video Production

By JACK GOULD

A virtual end to the ten-year-old controversy over color television appeared certain last night after the Columbia Broadcasting System announced that it had no present plans to broadcast

programs or to manufacture receivers under its color transmission system.

Frank Stanton, C. B. S. president, testifying before the House of Representatives Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee in Washington, said that "reluctantly but realistically" his network recognized that it now would be "economically foolish" to try to introduce to the public the Columbia system, even though it was the only system formally approved by the Federal Communications Commission.

The Columbia color system is described as "incompatible" because it will not reproduce a picture either in color or in black and white on any of the 23,000,000 television receivers now in use unless the set owner purchases additional equipment. An adapter would be needed to receive a monochrome picture as at present and a converter to pick up a color image.

'Compatible' System Spurred

The C. B. S. announcement was regarded in industry circles here as smoothing the way for introduction of the color system developed by the National Television System Committee, an all-industry group. The N. T. S. C. "compatible" system would not disturb present black-and-white reception while transmitting color programs. If, for example, Channel X were sending in color, present sets could receive the program in black and white.

The N. T. S. C. system currently is being tested by the Radio Corporation of America, the chief adversary of C. B. S. in the long color rivalry, over Channels 4, 9 and 11 in New York. The Allen B. DuMont Laboratories and the Hazeltine Electronics Corporation also are testing the system on Channel 5.

Tests Will Be Continued

Spokesmen for the national committee said that the tests probably would continue for several months before they asked the F. C. C. to adopt new color standards.

Mr. Stanton's announcement not only was the latest in a long series of climaxes in the color television controversy but also was reportedly unique in American industry. The Columbia network in effect had received from the Government a "technical monopoly" theoretically worth millions, it was noted, but now had acknowledged that it could not make practical use of it.

In his testimony, Mr. Stanton reviewed the entire history of color television and emphasized that the opponents of C. B. S. repeatedly had promised many variations of a better and compatible system, only to plead on each occasion for more time. Some of the promised systems, he noted wryly, just disappeared.

Mr. Stanton declined to commit himself on the new N. T. S. C. system, but emphasized that C. B. S.

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AT TV INQUIRY: Frank Stanton, president of the Columbia Broadcasting System, as he told House Commerce Committee why his chain was reluctant to go ahead with color telecasts and manufacture of color TV sets.

COLOR 'MONOPOLY' DROPPED BY C. B. S.

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always had favored any compatible method if it assured the early introduction of color.

"I cannot tell you whether or not we shall support the new compatible system, simply because we do not yet know enough about it and hence must reserve judgment," he said. "Perhaps this time it is different; perhaps this time they have found the answer."

Notes Concern of Public

Mr. Stanton attributed Columbia's problems with its color system in part to the lack of support from other manufacturers, virtually all of whom had disapproved of the C. B. S. method. In the meantime, he noted, the factor of public concern over the color problem has grown as more black-and-white sets were sold.

"Today there are almost 23,000,000 sets in American homes," he said. "I cannot minimize the problems which this creates. I do not think that the problem of incompatibility is necessarily fatal. But I do think that the problem of incompatibility has now grown to such proportions that, in combination with other factors, it becomes quixotic and economically foolish for us single-handedly at this time to resume a large-scale broadcasting and manufacturing program.

"We conclude that we would not be justified in undertaking at this time either to begin a regular color broadcast service under the existing color standards or to begin production of receivers."

Under the N. T. S. C. system it will probably be necessary to purchase a new receiver to see color TV. Conversion of present sets is not expected to be practical economically.