TROUBLE IN **TELEVISION** 

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By Alva Johnston



N EWBURGH is a beautiful old town of some 30,000 inhabitants on the west bank of the Hudson, about sixty miles north of New York War, George Washington made his headquarters there at the Hasbrouck House, which is now a www.seture museum.

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and then refunded the money. Asked to explain his output the second sec

Armand Tokatyan, of the Metropolitan Opera Company, sounds his tenor for the television audience. Left-Unretouched photograph of a close-up of Hildegarde, one of television's favorite singers.

This happened in Newburgh because Newburgh the Televisionville of America. There are more felevision sets there in proportion to population states the television in the Angels or New York. In 1930, the most of America has no sets at al. The public was delighted on the first day when live from the World's Fair in New York. In 1930, the public was delighted on the first day when live first day the levision. The second-day crowds were solved and repelled by ancient newsreel studies when the first day when the first day when the second day crowds were solved and repelled by ancient newsreel studies when the television. The second-day crowds were also and repelled by ancient newsreel studies were been devised. The second day is the second day the second day is the second day the s

"You can take my wife or my automobile, but not my television set," said one Newburgher.

#### Grunters and Groaners in the Home

TELEVISION was ready last March to sweep the country when its progress was suddenly checked by Washington's discovery that Americans in ordinary circumstances were too poor to buy television sets and must be protected from the temptation by the Federal Government.

The television set is a little theater housed in a piece of furniture. The stage, or viewing screen, may be seven and one half by ten inches or even les but the human eye is adaptable and rapidly falls under the delusion that it is seeing life-size action, Strangely enough, that branch of the theater which is contributing most to the popularity of television today is wrestling. Television is so good today that it registers every expression on the faces of the catch-as-catch-can tragedians. Every moan and every howl is reproduced. The modern television receiver includes one of the finest radio sets on the market.

Prize fighting had previously been the mother of arts. It did more than anything else to establish the movies, radio and English television. Forty-five years ago, the future of the cinema suddenly became assured when thousands of opera houses, barns and tents throughout the country rang with cheers at the first motion-picture prize fight - a four-round bout between James J. Corbett and a forgotten battler named Courtney. Broadcasting was put on its feet commercially in 1921 by the rush to pay \$300 a set for earphone receivers when the Dempsey-Carpentier fight was put on the air by what was then known as "wireless telephony," A year and a half ago, Londoners paid a guinea a ticket to see a prize fight in theaters equipped with large television acreens. What television needs today is another Dempsey. Obstructionists in Washington would be

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swept away by the clamor to hear and see new

battles of the century over television networks. The sky line of Newburgh has been changed by television. Tourists stop their cars to gaze at what appear to be newfangled lightning rods. These are the television antennae. They look like steel-handled, two-pronged pitchforks and rise twenty feet or more above the roofs of buildings. In the early days of television at Newburgh, some people were under the impression that the television pictures appeared on the antennae, and groups so times stood gazing at the steel apparatus and waiting for the show; just as people a few generations ago used to watch the telegraph wires in the expectation of seeing the messages. Others labored under the delusion that the owner of a television set could tune in on any event in any part of the world, and were surprised to learn that television at Newburgh is limited at present to about two hours of entertainment broadcast daily from the top of the world's highest building. It was a surprise to many to learn that a television set was like the old silent films, instead of being like the modern talking pictures.

A year ago it was supposed that not more than six or eight people could enjoy television pictures on a reen seven and one half by ten inches. More than fifty people, cheering, booing, shouting advice, have watched wrestling matches and prize fights on screens that size in Newburgh. John J. McDermott, who has a place at 200 Ann Street, Newburgh, reports that more than thirty people have turned out to see a basketball game on a small television set which has a screen approximately six by eight inches,

Some of the menaces of television to the housewife ere described by Mrs. J. E. McGrath, of 283 Powell Avenue, Newburgh. In the first place, it is becoming impossible, she said, to handle the crowds of callers on the nights of good television shows vithout erecting bleachers in the living room. The McGrath residence is set back about twenty feet from the sidewalk, and on wrestling nights groups gather on the sidewalk and watch the show through the parlor window. Two relatives making an automobile tour dropped in on the McGraths for a oneday visit. After seeing television, they stayed five days to avoid missing a scheduled night of wrestling. One of the televiewers at the McGrath residence wa Chairman James Lawrence Fly, of the Federal Communications Commission. "He saw a wrestling match," said Mrs. McGrath,

"and said, 'This is better than a ringside seat.' The man who was with him tied himself up in knots and

Television's Charlie McCarthys are electrically motivated. NBC's William C. Eddy exhibits Li'l' Joe, capable of lifteen gestures, and Albert, the donkey, who lashes his tail, nods, heaves his sides.



twisted himself all around, as if he were wrestling himself, while he watched the show,

Chairman Fly, who was so enthusiastic about television at Newburgh, is one of the sponsors of the theory that people of moderate and low incomes should be protected against television because of a supposititious danger that the present-day television sets may soon become obsolete.

You may be able to afford it, but others can't." said Fly at a meeting of the Advertising Club, in New York City, on April second of this year.

A precedent for Chairman Fly's campaign to pro tect the poor against luxuries is to be found in the records of seventeenth-century trials in Boston, where women were convicted and fined for wearing silk, unless able to prove that their husbands were worth more than \$1000. There is no doubt that persons of moderate and low incomes have willfully purchased television sets in Newburgh, At least one purchaser has the impertinence to be earning only twenty dollars a week.

Frank R. Dutcher, of Balmville Road, Newburgh, has a small television set which packs them in regularly. The capacity of his cottage is thirty people, which includes standees in the kitchen, from which the television screen is visible. He has had to "turn 'em away" twice: once on a wrestling night and once when his daughter, Helen Dutcher, took part in a television spelling match. Chairman Fly, of the FCC, visited the Dutchers to see their television set in operation.

The first thing that Chairman Fly said," said Mrs. Dutcher, "is 'This is going to kill the movies."

## Guardians of the Poor Man's Pocketbook

THE argument of Chairman Fly and some of his fellow members of the Federal Communications Commission, which controls television, is that none but well-to-do people should participate in the ex-citement of television, because a genius may come along someday with a new and improved system of television which will outmode the current sets. No new genius has arrived on the horizon of television, however. There is nothing, except some possible eccentricity on the part of the commission itself, which threatens to destroy the usefulness of the existing sets for years. Nearly everybody agrees that geniuses will arise, and that at some day in the future the public will pay \$39.75 for a set which will combine color, three dimensions and better de-tail than the movies. That day may be ten or twenty years hence. But, according to Chairman Fly. "a couple of generations in scientific development is not long."

In the course of the television controversy, some body pointed out that there is such a thing as "obsolescence of time." The Dutchers, for ex-The Dutchers, for example, bought their television set chiefly for the benefit of Mrs. Dutcher's father, who is seventynine years old and in feeble health. In spite of failing eyes, television, he says, is the greatest enjoy-ment of his life and brings him glimpses of an unknown world. The thrill of being a pioneer in television is one of the points overlooked by Federal politicians; possibly because they have lived so long in what Senator Lundeen called "the smug atmosphere of Washington." Early pioneers in radio say there was no thrill equal to that of catch-ing the first "cat's whicker" of sound over the old crystal sets: sets which they would never have owned if the bureaucrats of twenty years ago had formed the habit of safeguarding the common people against new inventions.

The first year of public television in America has been one of remarkable scientific advance, in spite of stubborn political obstruction. A year ago, national television networks seemed impossible because the television-carrying cables cost \$5000 a mile. Today, national networks at moderate cost are assured through the development of short-wave relay stations for television. It was considered impossible a year ago to send television over telephone wires; today it is being done regularly. Portable television cameras for outdoor use have been made lighter and cheaper.

The television camera is already more efficient than the motion-picture (Continued on Barn 37)

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camera in some respects. There were repeated uproars at the Republican Convention at Philadelphia because of the blinding lights required by motionpicture photographers, but the television cameras worked satisfactorily when the lights were comparatively dim. The Don Lee station of Los Angeles, which has been broadcasting television experimentally for ten years, succeeded in televising the Pasadena Rose Parade, on January 1, 1940, in a rainstorm.

One highly suggestive application of the new art by the Don Lee station was that of transmitting the thumbprints of a criminal to the 400 or 500 television sets in the Los Angeles area; from these wireless motion pictures, seven sheriffs were able to identify the criminal immediately. The television art is so far advanced that, according to the testimony of a Don Lee representative, a chain of theaters on the Pacific Coast has offered to pay \$18,-000 a week for a regular television service on motion-picture screens in its theaters.

The television camera still has faults. It "sees" infrared rays, which the eye does not. Its sensitivity to "invisible light" causes some odd effects. Red, for example, appears as gray in black-andwhite movies or in ordinary photo-graphs, but it is nearly white in levision. Because green leaves reflect infrared rays, a tree may appear to be snow-colored in midsummer in television. A blonde is a "blizzard head" in the dictionary of television, because her hair appears in television as a glittering storm of sparks; a brunette is a "dark angel" because her coloring is perfect for television; a redhead is a "problem child" because it is impos-sible to tell in advance just how she will look when she is put on the air. Television has a way of probing below the surface; it will sometimes disregard dyes and picture a head of hair in its natural color. It photographs unsprouted whiskers as well as sprouted ones. An actor, gifted by nature with an indigo beard, may be barbered ten times over, but he will still appear to the television camera as a shaggy blue tramp, unless he buries his face deep in make-up. Some television cameras have been found unavailable for use on because they render certain kinds of bathing suits invisible.

#### Halting a New Industry

Wrestling is not the sole support of television. One of the most successful features has been the television drama, with flesh-and-blood actors, sometimes supported by film sequences. A fifty-minute tabloid version of Jane Eyre achieved the highest popularity. The television public gives regular ratings of Poor, Fair, Good and Excellent to NBC programs. These are sent on post cards to television headquarters, where they are used as a basis of discovering public taste. Other flesh-and-blood tele vision dramas broadcast from the NBC studios included Little Women, Treasure Island, Ethan Frome, Pinafore, The Pirates of Penzance and William Saroyan's My Heart's in the Highlands. Some of these were received with enthu-siasm by theatrical men. One of the popular television numbers in Los Angeles has been the televising of re-hearnals of motion-picture scenes at the RKO studio in Hollywood.

Outdoor sports usually received high ratings. Larry MacPhail allowed the opening game of the Dodgers to be televised free of charge as a contribution to science. Mike Jacobs has al-lowed several fight shows at Madison Square Garden to go on the air by tele-Square Garden to go on the air by tele-vision, because he foresees the day when the big battles will all be tele-vision shows. His theory is that there will be a studio audience of 1000 at \$100 a ticket at a championship bout, while television audiences in homes and theaters throughout the country run into the millions, and advertisers bid vast sums for the privilege of being the sponsor. The wrestling industry has been delighted at the increase in its prestige resulting from getting into good homes via television. According to many accounts, refined women are the wildest enthusiasts over the television presentation of the struggles of the trumpeting pachyderms. I. T. Flatto, manager of the Ridgewood Grove Athletic Club, permitted all his boxing and wrestling shows to be put

H. Grimditch, an executive of Philco, television is so big that it will "dwarf radio almost into insignificance." Thousands of engineers, electricians, factory workers, salesmen, research men, ac-tors, directors, musicians and others would have been put to work in tele vision in the past six months, except for the FCC. As it is, hundreds lost their positions. Chairman Fly's explanation before the Senate committee was that the FCC had "misjudged the situa-tion." Several of the seven members of the FCC have long records as business baiters. The transcript of the television hearings before the FCC makes it fairly clear that some of the commissioners are the kind of men who would rather have a controversy than an industry.

Chairman Fly's confession of error was made on April tenth before the Committee on Interstate Commerce of the U. S. Senate. At the hearing, Senator Lundeen described the FCC as "a little group of incompetent people" who held a "midnight session behind



"Spike Malloy, you're not going to name any son of mine Man o'War!"

on the air free of charge until bureaucrats put a stop to it.

This particular attack on television was made by the New York Boxing Commission. Its chairman, J. J. Phelan, said that he did not see where there was "anything in it" for New York State.

"anything in it" for New York State. The FCC's attack on television started early this year. In February, the FCC authorized David Sarnoff, president of the Radio Corporation of America, to start a campaign to sell television sets. In March, the commission attacked Sarnoff for carrying out the authorized plan. In April, Chairman Fly testified before a Senate committee that the FCC had been wrong and that Sarnoff had been right. In the meantime, however, the public had been scared away from television. In the first week of his campaign, Sarnoff had sold 500 sets; in the second week, after the commission's attack, he sold only ten sets. A new industry was stopped in its tracks. According to Sarnoff, television should become a billion-dollar-a-year industry employing amillion men. According to William locked doors" for the purpose of "putting something over." "I want to relieve our twelve mil-

"I want to relieve our twelve million unemployed," said Lundeen, "but their numbers will be further increased if these little Government bureaus are going to intrude themselves into research that belongs to business engineers, and into business management that belongs to business executives. Under our present way of doing business, we are proceeding to paralyze industry in this country, and we cannot stand any more paralysis than we have."

More than \$20,000,000 has been spent in research in television in America. All modern television, both in America and Europe, is based on the work of Farnsworth, Zworykin, Alexanderson and other American scientists. Politicians paid little attention to it during its period of struggle. Curiously enough, the onslaught on television is founded on the discovery that the law intended the FCC to act as a guardian angel or patron of television. The experience of television with the FCC is a vindication of Doctor Johnson's definition of a patron as "one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when be has reached ground encumbers him with help."

The commission found its first important opportunity for trouble after television had progressed to a stage where advertising agencies became interested in experiment, the Radio Corporation had reported to the commission that a vigorous sales campaign might sell 25,000 or more sets in the New York area within a year; and that, with a television public of this size, advertising sponsors would be willing to invest money in pioneering and research in television programs. The FCC okayed the RCA plan, and on February twenty-ninth authorized "limited commercialization."

#### A Well-Advertised Surprise

The phrase "limited commercialization" is one indication of the FCC's state of mind. "Limited commercialization" means that the advertising sponsor may pay the cost of the program, but nothing more. The purpose of this was to prevent the television industry from overcharging advertisers. One commissioner expressed the fear that television would sell "blue fear that television would sell blue fear that television agencies are the wariest and canniest businessmen in the world.

When Sarnoff went ahead with his commission-approved plan, the com-mission swung into action. It charged him with aiming at monopoly, with attempting to "saturate the market," to get the jump on his competitors, to "freeze the standards," and to load the public with instruments which might soon become obsolete. Commissioners claimed to be taken by surprise by the plan to sell 25,000 sets; the stenographic record of the hearings before the FCC showed that the plan to sell 25,000 sets or more had been mentioned before the commission twenty-eight times. There is only one practical television man on the commission. This is Com. T. A. M. Craven, a retired naval officer and radio engineer. He described the commission's attitude as "absurd on its face." Former Governor Norman S Former Governor Norman S. Case, of Rhode Island, is another commissioner who has not participated in the hostilities against television.

Had Sarnoff been a smaller man, there probably would not have been any trouble in television. A less important figure would not have been attractive as a target for an anti-bigbusiness crusade. Twenty-four years ago, Sarnoff had an almost exact vision of the future of radio and built a great industry on it. Twelve years ago, he had an even more glittering vision of the future of television and has played a leading part in laying the foundation for that industry. Thus he is made to order for the old-fashioned business baiter. Nothing increases an official's prestige in Washington like cracking down on a man like Sarnoff. If Com missioner Doe works up a feud with Sarnoff, it becomes known as the Doe-Sarnoff controversy, and Doe becomes an illustrious figure. One of Chairman Fly's colleagues was so eager to be known as the head antagonist of Sarnoff (Continued on Page 39)

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that, in the course of a speech, he interrupted himself frequently to exclaim, "Heil, Sarnoff. Heil, Sarnoff." The careers of several of the commissioners would form chapters in a history of the wars against business. The biography of Chairman Fly is an interesting example.

teresting example. A graduate of the U. S. Naval Academy and the Harvard Law School, Fly is a man of ability. His critics concede that he is a terrific worker and that he knows a good deal of law. He is probably the greatest genius in Washington for discovering one modest phrase in a statute and proving that it means that some obscure Federal jobholder possesses more power than Ivan the Terrible or the Great Cham of Tartary. The whole onslaught of the FCC against television is based on Chairman Fly's construction of the word "encourage." The process of hanging a smallpox sign on television is based on hidden meanings supposed to lark in the command of Congress that the FCC "encourage" television. It is probably the most uncommon use of the word "encourage" since Voltaire wrote his famous line that the British government shot an admiral from time to time "to encourage the others."

Fly became a trust-buster in the Department of Justice in the time of President Hoover, and later a battler against utilities as a lawyer for TVA. He is, according to one Washington columnist, "the cockiest" official who ever "scuttled an economic royalist's ship." He sees signs of big-business conspiracies in the most innocent words. He once interrupted a television engineer who testified that a certain engineering practice was "recommended."

"I've been in the antitrust business for five years," said Fly, "and I'm afraid of the word 'recommendation.""

Uproarts have a habit of following Fly around. What is said to have been one of the most painful scenes in the history of the Supreme Court occurred on November 15, 1938, when Fly insulted Justice Roberts, who was inquiring as to the meaning of a phrase. "It is clear everywhere except in your honor's mind," said Fly.

#### The Fly in the Television Ointment

Fly treats witnesses before the FCC with no more ceremony than if they were Supreme Court justices. Lewis Allen Weiss, of Los Angeles, an executive of the Don Lee organization, was testifying that the Don Lee policy was to seek the best that there was in television.

Fly cut in, "That's Rotary Club talk. That's just a Rotary Club speech about American democracies have always progressed, and we will find the ways, and all that sort of stuff."

ways, and all that sort or scar. When Fly became chairman of the FCC a year ago, he decreed that everybody should rise when the commissioners enter the room. The custom of rising in courtrooms at the entrance of judges goes back a thousand years or so to the time when a judge was supposed to be, not the personal representative of the king but the king himself.

It would show a better sense of the fitness of things if the commissioners jumped up every time a taxpayer entered the room.

The worst quality of any Federal board, agency, bureau or commission is ambiguity. Some of the orders and announcements on television have been models of bureaucratic double-talk, ordering the throttle open and the brakes on at the same time. No matter what a businessman does, he can be held to be in the wrong. Chairman Fly is an outspoken champion of ambiguity. In his testimony at the congressional inquiry into TVA, he praised a letter for what he called its "delightful ambiguity"; it had been written with a double meaning and had misled its recipient. Asked at an FCC press conference to elucidate the meaning of a bewildering pronouncement, Fly laughed and used both hands to draw a picture in the air of a fantastic machine of the Rube Goldberg or Joe Cook type.

"The meaning is poured in here," he said, "and it circles round and round over there for a while, then it flows over this way and mixes about a bit, then it doubles back this way, and finally it meanders around and comes out way down here."

Sarnoff's struggle to bring television into being in America is a strange chronicle. His company spent approximately \$10,000,000 on television research. The first anti-Sarnoff campaign was started a few years ago, on the theory that Sarnoff was malingering; that he was deliberately holding back television because he feared that the new art would interfere with profits from the radio business. He was summoned to Washington by high authority and given to understand that America could not afford to allow England, Germany and other countries to lead it in television. From some influential quarters came demands for Government ownership of television, because of the alleged sabotage of television by Sarnoff and others. Finally, after getting television established by enormous effort and cost, Sarnoff found himself the ringleader of an equally vicious but totally different sort of conspiracy. He was conspiring, this time, not to keep television away from the people but to foist it on them.

Even after Chairman Fly had withdrawn his charges against Sarnoff before the Senate committee, the berating of the RCA chief continued. When newspapers and magazines criticized the FCC, Sarnoff was accused of "inspiring" them. He was accused of bringing influence to bear on Tommy Corcoran and Benny Cohen to induce the commission to mend its ways. The height of "conspiracy-suspecting" was reached when Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen preached a sermon in praise of television; Sarnoff was accused of "using the Catholic Church." It makes Sarnoff a pretty colossal fellow; he controls the press, the pulpit and Corcoran & Cohen.

Television, reduced to its simplest terms, is the art of wirelessing light in-stead of sound. The television camera photographs a scene by picking up pin points of light and shadow at the rate of approximately 400,000 a second; these are broadcast at the same rate of speed to the television receiving sets, where they are reassembled into the original scenes. These pin points can be managed so that they form a large number of pictures per second or small number of pictures per second in the receiving sets. For example, if only one picture per second were shown, would be a mosaic of 400,000 dots, showing the fine points of a scene with almost perfect detail, but it would fade out almost instantly and be succeeded by an interval of darkness. The spectator would be seeing still photographs, instead of the equivalent of motion pictures.

If fifteen pictures per second are reproduced, the detail is good, but the motion is even ferkier than that of the early movies. Fifteen pictures a second gives good results on croquet or square dances, but when it is used on a ranning race or other fast motion, the figures leap about as if animated by a series of nervous twitches. The movies of today use twenty-four pictures a second. Modern television uses thirty pictures a second, which is an improvement over the movies in abowing the finish of a horse race, fast action on a baseball field or any other form of rapid motion. All this is elementary. It is routine knowledge to all well-versed motion-picture and television people. Some of the members of the FCC, unfortunately, are in the early stage of their education in television. When a television engineer tried to explain this subject at an FCC hearing, one of the commissioners exclamed. "That's an educated guess."

#### Soap-Box Scientists

Chairman Fly, as has been said, is an able man. The way he boned up on television was a surprise to the industry. Within a few months he was able to rattle off the nomenclature with the best of them. Had television been an ordinary branch of knowledge, he might have become a master of it. But television happens to be a combination of many sciences. It is divided into scores of specialties, and the specialist is lucky if he has a complete grasp of his own specialty. It is a field in which a little learning is a particularly dan-gerous thing. The late Sir Joseph Duveen put the matter a little more bluntly when he said, "No amateur knows anything." The worst fault of the bright amateur in any line is the tendency to use figures of speech as a substitute for knowledge. Chairman Chairman Fly has developed a small dictionary of metaphors, such as the "lock-and-key" situation, "the standard-gauge track" and "freezing the standards." They represent an honest effort to translate scientific and engineering complexities into the language of stump oratory. The trouble is that they be-come slogans and battle cries. They are useful in political-shouting affrays, but not in constructive deliberation. The "lock-and-key" metaphor, as far as it means anything, indicates that the television-transmitting set is the "lock" "key"; and that if the "lock" is changed, the "key" becomes useless. The figure of speech evaporates, how-ever, because the television tube is a versatile instrument which can be adjusted to any practical type of television now in existence or promising to come into existence. Marshall P. Wilder, a television engineer, correctly explained to the commission that the receiving set is "an extremely flexible skeleton key, capable of fitting a wide variety of locks." "Freezing the standis supposed to mean the prevenards" tion of future improvement. The FCC stoutly maintains that the sale of 25,000 television sets will "freeze the standards" of television, even though the sale of 44,000,000 radio sets has not prevented improvements such as Frequency Modulation in radio.

One of the difficulties in television today is that in Washington it has become a sort of soap-box science. Politicians are trying to talk like scientiats, and scientists in turn are compelled to try to talk like politicians. Nothing beclouds the future of television more than a few flowers of rhetoric. Cool Shaves



Men! Say "hello!" to cool and soothing Ingram's...and say "good-bye!" to hot and irritating shaves!



Change to Ingram's now...for cool, quick, easy shaves. Ingram's leaves your face refreshed for hours-more attractive looking. too. No lotion needed. In tube or jar -the same cooling, economical reserv

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