Trouble in Television

By Alva Johnston

Newburgh is a beautiful old town of some 20,000 inhabitants on the west bank of the Hudson, about sixty miles north of New York City. During the last stage of the Revolutionary War, George Washington made his headquarters there at the Hasbrouck House, which is now a museum.

Like most places of its size, Newburgh has enough home players to support a few bookmakers. Shortly after the opening at Belmont Park this year, two of the bookmakers were cleared out. On Wednesdays and Saturdays a group of Newburghers had become infallible in picking winners.

One promoter of the 100-per-cent-perfect system of beating the races was too honest to use it. This amiable character is John Guernsey, proprietor of Your Lunch, at 370 Broadway, Newburgh. He called up a friend in the bookmaking line six times one afternoon, placed bets on the winner each time and then refunded the money. Asked to explain his system, Guernsey answered in one word: "Television."

There are television sets in Your Lunch and other cafés in Newburgh. Races were televised on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The spectators at a television set saw the horses first in the paddock, with the radio comment of Glenn McCarthy, sports commentator, then the finish of each race, less than a thousandth part of a second after the event. The bookmakers, on the other hand, had to wait until the judges had put up the numbers of the first three horses and these numbers were relayed to a broadcasting station to be put on the air. This intelligence has been greatly slowed up by the Federal Government’s current war on the race-track syndicates. The televisioners had a minute or perhaps several in which to telephone their bets or to run with them to a nearby bookie’s hideout.

This happened in Newburgh because Newburgh is the Televisionville of America. There are more television sets there in proportion to population than anywhere else on earth. They are ten times as thick in Newburgh as in Los Angeles or New York, while most of America has no sets at all.

The Radio Corporation attempted to launch television at the World’s Fair in New York, in 1933. The public was delighted on the first day when live talent—mock-and-blood celebrities—appeared and talked by television. The second-day crowds were annoyed and repelled by ancient tawdry stuff such as Sponge Fishing in Florida, which nearly everybody would give twenty-five or thirty cents not to know about.

Only a few dozen sets were sold during the first season of the fair. However, rapid progress was made in programs and in the technical quality of television. Frank Sigmoff, president of RCA, decided...
last fall that television was ready for a trial on a typical town within range of the RCA television-transmitting station on top of the Empire State Building. New York was chosen because it was not very big and not very small, not very rich and not very poor. It was also chosen because it was too far from the Empire State Building to get television reception of the best quality. The aim was to discover whether an average community would be pleased with television of average quality. The campaign was a success. Nearly 200 sets were sold in the New York area. New York loves television.

"You can take my wife or my house, but not my television," said one New Yorker.

**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 less, but the human eye is adaptable and readily falls under the delusion that it is seeing life-size action. Strange 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 spectators. Every moan and every howl is reproduced. The modern television receiver includes one of the finest radio sets on the market.

Prime 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, halls 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 $500 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 screens. What television needs today is another Dempsey. Obstructionists in Washington would be swept away by the clamor to hear and see new battles of the century over television networks.

The skyline of New York has been changed by television. Tourists stop their cars at what appear to be new-fangled lighting rods. These are the television antennae. They look like steel-handled, two-paned prisms, and rise twenty feet or more above the roofs of buildings. In the early days of television at New York, some people were under the impression that the television picture appeared on the antenna, and groups sometimes 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 harbored 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 New York is limited 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 screen seven and one half by ten inches. More than fifty people, cheering, shouting, jumping about, have watched wrestling matches and prize fights on television sets. The McGraw 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 McGraws for a one-day visit. After seeing television, they stayed five days to avoid missing a scheduled night of wrestling. One of the television watchers at the McGraw residence was Mrs. McGraw, and she said, "This is better than a ringside seat. The man who was with him tied himself up in knots and twisted himself all around, as if he were wrestling himself, while he watched the show."

Chairman Fly, who is so enthusiastic about television in New York, is one of the sponsors of the theory that people of moderate income should be protected against television because of a supposed danger that the present-day television sets sometimes obscure the messages. "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 24.

A precedent for Chairman Fly's campaign to protect the poor against luxuries is to be found in the record of television sales 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 wilfully purchased television sets in New York. At least one purchaser has the importunity to be earning only twenty dollars a week.

Prank 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 a standee in the kitchen, from which the television screen is visible. He has had to "turn 'em away," particularly on wrestling nights when one of his children, Helen Dutcher, can be seen in a television spelling match. Chairman Fly, of the Federal Communications Commission, asked the Dutcher family 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**

This argument of Chairman Fly and some of his fellow members of the Federal Communications Commission, which controls television, is that none but the very rich people should enjoy the excitement of television, because a new man can come along someday with a new and improved system of television which would outshine the old one. 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 genieus will arise, and that at some day in the future the public will pay $29.75 for a set which will combine color, three dimensions and better detail 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, somebody pointed out that there were a few who recognized the "obsolescence of time." The Dutcher family, for example, bought their television set chiefly for the benefit of Mrs. Dutcher's father, who is seventy-nine years old and in feeble health. In spite of failing eyes, television, he says, is the greatest enjoyment 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 smog atmosphere of Washington." Early pioneers in radio and television were so thrilled to be out in the front that they did not bother to watch the old crystal sets; sets which they now would love to own if the bureaucrats of many years ago had formed a habit of safeguarding the common people against new inventions.

The first year of public television in America has been one of remarkable scientific advances, in spite of stubborn political obstruction. A year ago, national television networks seemed impossible because there was no television-carried over the air. Today, national networks at moderate cost are assured through the development of short-wave relay stations for television. But, considered impossible a year ago to send television or top relays; 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 Page 37)
TROUBLE IN TELEVISION
(Continued from Page 5)

camera in some respects. There were repeated upsets at the Republican Convention. There were the blinding lights required by motion-picture photographers, but the television cameras didn't care. When the lights were comparatively dim, the Don Lee station of Los Angeles has its television experiments 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 to transmit the fingerpints 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, the wave does not. Its sensitivity to "invisible light" causes some odd effects. Red, for example, appears as gray in black-and-white movies, but it is nearly white in television. Because green leaves reflect infrared rays, a tree may appear to be snow-covered in midsummer in television. A blonde is a "blondie 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 impossible to pin down just how she will look when she is put on the air. Television has a way of probing below the surface; it will entertain freeway dyes and picture a head of hair in its natural color. It photographs unsmugly wry smiles as well as sly 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 shiny blue tramp, unless he buries his face deep in his makeup. Some television cameras have been found unavailable for use on benches because they render certain kinds of bathing suits invisible.

Hailting 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 program gives regular ratings of Poor, Fair, Good and Excellent to NBC programs on the basis of the number of home cards to television headquarters, where they are used as a basis of discovering public taste. Some local television dramas broadcast from the NBC studios included Little Women, Treasure Island, and Pioneers. The Pirates of Penzance, Hindle Wakes, Black Country Miners, Moby Dick, and Har- oyan's My Heart's in the Highlands. Some of these programs have been received with enthusiasm by theater managers, while some of the popular television programs in Los Angeles have been the revivals of motion-picture classics at the RKO studio in Hollywood.

Outdoor sports usually received high ratings. Larry MacHill allowed the opening game of the Dodgers to be televised free of charge as a contribution to science. Mike Jacobs has allowed several light shows at Madison Square Garden to go on the air by television, because he foresees the day when the big battles will be televised shows. His theory is that there will be a studio audience of 1,000 at $100 a ticket at a championship show, while television audiences in hotels 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 trumpet-playing pitchman and the wrestling stud.

Flatto, manager of the Ridgewood Grove Athletic Club, permitted all his boxing and wrestling shows to be put on the air free of charge until bureau- crats put a stop to it. This particular attack on television was made by the New York Boxing Commission, which, in a letter, said that he did not see where there was 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. However, the public had been scared away from television. In the first week of its 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 industry employing a million men. Accordingly, were bid locked doors" for the purpose of "putting something over."

"I want to relieve our twelve million unemployed," said Lundeen, "but they're 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 $23,000,000 has been spent in research in television in America alone, $3,000,000 in America and Europe, is based on the work of Farnsworth, Zworykin, Alexander, and other American scientists. Politicians can only muddle along to it during its period of struggle. Curiously enough, the onalogue on television in England illustrated the law that the FCC 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 polite man with unmerciful on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground and is out of danger, the viewings and other agencies became interested in experimenting with it. As a result of the vigorous experiment by the Radio Corporation of America, the commission that a vigorous sales campaign might sell $5,000 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 considerable advertising and research in television programs. The FCC obeyed the RCA plan, and on February twenty-ninth authorized "limited commercialization."

A Well-Advertised Surprise

The phrase "limited commercialization" is one of the most difficult to understand, but there is nothing to it excepting that the public will be able to view certain programs for a fee. The FCC is not interested in the commercial exploitation of television, but rather in its educational and cultural uses.

When Sarnoff went ahead with his commission-approved plan, the commission was earned several sets. The FCC had it its mind to "freeze the standards," and to load the public with instruments which might soon become obsolete. Commissioners claimed that they were not 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 solution to the problem of the FCC on the commission. This is Com. T. A. M. Craven, a retired naval officer and radio engineer, is well qualified to conserve the commission's attitude as "abundant on its face." Former Governor Norman S. Case, of Rhode Island, is another commissioner who has not participated in the hostilities against television.

Haid Sarnoff was 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-big-business crusade. Twenty-four years ago, Sarnoff had an almost exact vision of the future of television and has played a leading part in laying the foundation for that industry. Thus is he made to be a popular hero. By contrast, Sarnoff, it becomes known as the Doe-Sarnoff controversy, and Doe becomes the popular hero. "I believe that Sarnoff's" colleagues was so eager to be known as the head antagonist of Sarnoff (Continued on Page 8)
Cool Shaves "arrest" razor stings and burn!

If fifteen pictures per second are representing the throttle opening, the detail is good, but it brakes on at the same time. No matter what a businessman does, he can be in the wrong. It would be the wrong thing if Fly TV is an outspokean champion of ambiguity. In his testimony at the congressional hearing, Mr. Fly, a former engineer, had a letter printed in the Senate Journal where he called it his "delightful ambiguity," as it had been placed in double meaning and had missed its recipient. Asked at an FCC press conference to elucidate the meaning of a bewildering pronouncement, Fly laughed and used both hands to draw his crowd into a picture of the plane in a caricature moment of the plane of the Rubie (Goldberg or Joy Cool type).

The silliness is poured in here," he said, and it circles round and round over for a while, then it flows over into the next circle, then it doubles back on itself, and finally it meanders around and comes out way again. Mr. Fly's struggle to bring television into being in America is a strange chronicle. His company spent approximately $10,000,000 on television research before the FCC's first anti-Sarnoff campaign started a few years ago, on the theory that Sarnoff was making a business out of deliberately holding back television because he feared that the new age of opportunity would interfere with Columbia pictures. He was summoned to Washington by high authorities and given to understand that the committee could not afford to allow England, Germany, and other countries to lead in television. From some influential quarters came demands for Government ownership of television, because of the alleged sabotage of the radio business. Sarnoff and others. Finally, after getting television established by enormous effort and cost, Sarnoff found himself in the typewriter of an equally vicious but totally different sort of conspiracy. He was conspiring, this time, 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 reported that the FCC approved Sarnoff's "inspiring" them, he was accused of having influence to hear a car horn roll, or a Corcoran and Benny Cohen to indicate the FCC's approval of its words. The height of "conspiracy-was-what" 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 colloquial fellow; he controls the press, the art of the Corcoran and Cohen.

Television, reduced to its simplest terms, is the art of wirelessing light instead of sound. The television camera photographs a scene by picking up points of light and shadow at the rate of approximately 400,000 per second; these are broadcast at the same rate of speed to the television receiving sets, where they are reassembled into the original scene. These points can be managed so that they form a large number of pictures per second or a smaller number of pictures per second in the receiving sets. For example, if only one picture per second were shown, it would only resemble a mosaic of 400 of 500 television pictures, showing the fine points of a scene with almost perfect detail, but it would fade out fastest instantly and fade out by an interval of darkness. The speed would be seen still photographs, the equivalent of motion pictures.

Soap-Box Scientists

Chairman Fly, as has been said, is an able man. The way he hopped the FCC was a public television was a public service, as he was able to make use of the station with the best of them. Had television been an ordinary branch of knowledge, he might be made a master of it. But television happens to be a combination of many sciences. It is divided into sciences of specialists, 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 dangerous thing. The late Sir Joseph Duveen put the matter a little more directly 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, instead of a substitute for knowledge. 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-speaking.

The trouble is that they are not used.

That rich, creamy lather with whisks in a jiffy... let your razor give you a quick, clean shave. And all the time your face is smoothed by Ingram's special Coolness!

INGRAM'S SHAVING CREAM
IN TUBE OR JAR