



Radio's Neglected Network

“YOU FELLOWS are giving us nothing but trouble,” a staff member of the Senate Commerce Committee said recently to officials of National Educational Radio (NER). Then he added with a smile, “But keep it up!” The remark illustrates the friendly, receptive attitude of lawmakers on Capitol Hill, who want to help educational radio but realize that support needs to be built up generally among legislators and their constituents.

Senator Warren G. Magnuson, the Commerce Committee's chairman, introduced the Public Television Act of 1967 in the upper chamber of Congress; his committee plans to hold hearings on the bill in April, and will shepherd it through the Senate to a vote. The bill renews the 1962 television facilities act and also provides, for the first time, financial support for noncommercial radio. This represents a major achievement for NER, and its energetic leaders are eager to see that the provisions affecting educational radio are not deleted. To this end they have been conducting a vigorous informational campaign among Congressmen, providing data that indicates the rich potential of the medium and transmitting their contagious zeal for a renaissance of educational radio.

National Educational Radio has been campaigning for more than two years, since its founding under the leadership of Jerrold Sandler, executive director, and E. G. Burrows, chairman of NER's parent body—the National Association of Educational Broadcasters. In an age of burgeoning communications technology, the new directors are certain that educational radio has an important role to play. Their efforts resulted in the first

live network interconnection of educational radio stations in this country—a broadcast throughout the United States of West German election returns. Then, with the help of the Johnson Foundation of Racine, Wisconsin, the NER directors last year convened the Wingspread Conference on Educational Radio as a National Resource. Representatives of government, industry, communications, education, philanthropy, and the arts talked candidly about the future of educational radio in a time of world-wide television satellites. The patient survived a relentless scrutiny: The conference participants mapped a campaign to tone up educational radio and to bring its performance and potential to national attention.

Basic to that campaign is a comprehensive survey of educational radio stations around the country. No such survey had ever been made but it was essential if financial backing were to be secured from government and foundation godfathers whose green wands are all atilt in the direction of educational television. NER conducted the study with the help of Herman W. Land Associates, a New York consulting firm. Facts, figures, and plans were gathered from 150 of the leading educational radio stations in the country. An outstanding result is that assumptions about the audience for educational radio will have to be revised upward.

Listeners throughout the nation hear educational radio programs not only directly from the noncommercial stations but also on commercial stations. Many educational radio stations provide programs regularly to commercial stations, at no charge other than handling fees, and these are available for sale by the

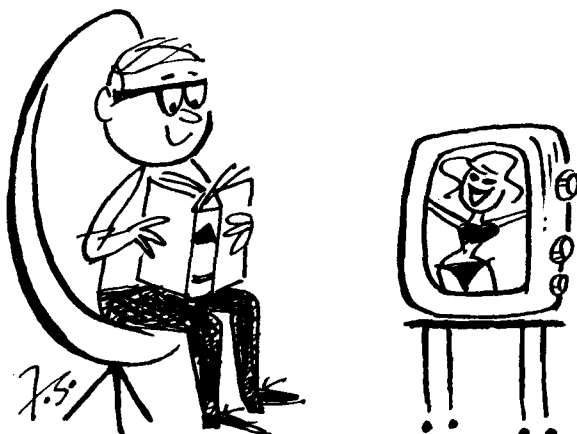
commercial stations to sponsors. KWSC the Washington State University station, supplies ninety-four commercial stations in Washington, Oregon, Utah, Idaho, and Missouri with one or more weekly programs. WUOM, the University of Michigan station, supplies 100 commercial stations in the state with one or more programs a week. The K-State Network of Kansas State University, at Manhattan, Kansas, reaches 95 per cent of Kansas homes through commercial stations. The network provided these stations with 14,000 tapes in 1966.

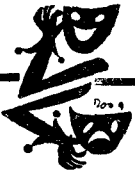
The survey revealed that in some cases in particular time periods educational radio stations attract more listeners than their commercial competitors. In November 1966, KWSC, the Washington State station, had a 30.5 per cent share of the available audience in the 8 a.m. time period, as against a 23.4 per cent share for the top commercial competitor. These are only a few of the many examples turned up by the NER-Land survey that suggest a new scope and penetration of some educational radio stations.

Along with the success stories in the survey, however, there are many cases in which special services by educational radio stations go begging for a mere pittance of funds. The Wisconsin Educational Radio Network, the oldest and largest in the nation, has ambitious plans for multiplexing training programs throughout the state, but cannot put them into action because the \$7,500 needed to purchase and install the multiplex equipment is not available. The Public Television Act of 1967, following the President's recommendations, asks Congress for \$10,500,000 for radio and television facilities, and for \$9,000,000 for the establishment of the Corporation for Public Television, which will be charged with the encouragement and financial support of educational radio as well as TV programming.

Radio is a newcomer to the contest for public funds. It is uncertain at this time whether or not witnesses who support educational radio's case will be invited to testify at the Congressional hearings. To ensure that they will be called, and to ensure that educational radio will not be pushed entirely out of the way by the more publicized needs of noncommercial television, NER plans to “keep it up”—to continue its educational campaign among Congressmen, Senators, the public, sympathetic members of the press, and foundations. Though big plans are being made, small needs are not being met. An alert foundation could do the country a great service by ensuring that NER's case will be fully presented at the coming hearings. It would be a wise investment in a national resource.

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.





Brewing With Yeast

MILWAUKEE.

HOW DOES a repertory company keep its vitality? This is not a simple question, but the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre seems to have found some of the answers. To begin with, the company's new artistic director, Tunc (pronounced Toonch) Yalman, has both an internationally sophisticated knowledge of the standards a first-class company must meet, and a deep-seated belief in the function theater should perform. The aim of the theater, he says, is to turn the observer into a participant by making him recognize what is true and eternal in dramas of all periods.

Thus Mr. Yalman was able to score a success with his boldly chosen first production, Sophocles's *Electra*, performed in modern dress. And the whole season to date has set a new high attendance record of 92 per cent capacity. The young Turkish-born director is quick to admit, however, that whatever success he has enjoyed is due to other factors as well. There was his good luck in assembling a skilled company that happened to work well together. There is a board of directors which raises a projected \$130,000 annual deficit (one-half of the total budget), and which accepts the principle of noninterference in artistic policy. And, finally, there is MRT's Theater for Tomorrow Studio Series which presents new plays by living American playwrights under a \$25,000 Rockefeller grant. These new plays are performed twice a week at times when the theater would ordinarily be dark. Their most important effect may not be so much to help the new playwright, who sees his play performed and receives a few hundred dollars in royalties, but to feed the vitality of both the actors and the eager core of audience supporters who attend and discuss these imperfect and unrenowned works.

On a recent trip, this writer had the unusual experience of attending a student matinee of *The Merchant of Venice* and at 5:30 seeing many of the same actors performing Doug Taylor's *The Sudden and Accidental Re-education of Horse Johnson*. The Shakespeare comedy offered a hauntingly poetic Shylock by Boris Tumarin, and managed to capitalize on Portia's outwitting of Shylock's vengeful intent at the same time that it underlined Shylock's justification for despising Antonio. Director Eugene Lesser interpolated into the action a wordless reunion between Shylock and his daughter, and at the end of the trial

scene the moneylender was cruelly spat upon. These touches serve to increase our sympathy for Shylock.

An hour later a half-capacity audience assembled around the same arena stage appeared to enjoy the Taylor play, which is being given its first full performance here. It presents a very human situation in which Horse Johnson, a warehouse worker, has quit his job in order to study Emerson and Whitman. While he may not be literate enough to understand what he is reading, it turns out that in a primitive, intuitive way he is getting something out of it. Thus he is able to survive a number of rude awakenings.

The play, intelligently directed by Robert Benedetti, suffers from a frequent fluctuation between naturalism and satirical exaggeration. Still, as played by Michael Fairman and Mary Jane Kimbrough, Horse Johnson and his wife do capture our concern and the play emerges as a memorable experience.

Although the playwright wrote the work with actor Jack Klugman in mind—and indeed had had the prior experience of hearing his play read by Klugman, Kathleen Maguire, and others at last summer's Eugene O'Neill Memorial Theater Foundation Playwrights Conference—the experience of full production by a young, eager company in front of a paid audience was invaluable to

him. Here, unlike the three Broadway producers who had held options on the work, Theater for Tomorrow took the script as it stood and went ahead without asking for rewrites or waiting for the ideal actors to play the roles.

Mr. Taylor, a former actor and TV writer, has written three other plays which are awaiting production. His unveiling here suggests that as soon as he finds a certain exact distance to maintain between the real and the satirical, he could emerge as a fine playwright. Whether he does or not, he and the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre have had an invigorating adventure.

ELSEWHERE around the country, Memphis's Front Street Theater has come up with a delightfully earthy production of Molière's *The Miser*. Directed by Carl Weber and featuring Al Corbin as a dry old tightwad and Karen Grassle as his deliciously seductive daughter, it entertains in a most modern way.

At Baltimore's Center Stage, director Douglas Seale has attempted a modern dress version of Shakespeare's seldom-played *Titus Andronicus*. The first act is unsparing in its pursuit of violence, with Robert Geringer portraying Titus as a stern Nazi general. Those who can survive Act I's punishment are then treated to a second act in which Titus's madness is deeply explored. Graham Brown stands out in a Black Muslim version of the evil-embracing Aaron. And the rest of the company work together with fierce concentration to relate this ancient chamber of horrors to our time.

—HENRY HEWES.

