

# WHEN TELEVISION COMES

*According to a recent cable message from London, television will be available to everyone in Britain within five years. According to leading American authorities, it may be available in New York in 10 years to those who can afford to pay for it. Here is an attempt by the "New York Daily News" to forecast what the change will mean.*

**W**HEN the New York World's Fair is but a footnote in history, its opening day, April 30, 1939, will still be remembered. The annals of these times will record it as the occasion on which President Roosevelt, delivering the dedication address, served as the subject of the first programme of the first regular high definition television service in America.

It is certain that visual broadcasting will some day exert a greater influence on the daily lives, the amusements and reading habits of the masses than either the motion pictures or the radio. The inevitable changes, however, will not come overnight.

Television's growth will be slower than that of sound transmission; at present it is still like a streamlined train without a route chart or a time-table. The engineer knows where he is going, but not how or when he will get there. Technical and financial obstacles are responsible for this uncertainty.

## Prohibitive Network Costs

Sight stations cannot be linked into networks, as radio studios are, by means of telephone wires. Only a coaxial cable, which is a copper wire within a copper tube, can serve as a physical connection between stations. But its cost is prohibitive.

A one-hour sight show may need from forty to fifty hours of rehearsal, instead of the ten or fifteen hours devoted to a similar sound broadcasting entertainment. Unlike the radio performer, the television player must memorise lines, put on make-up, wear costumes, take direction and master the complicated art of always being within proper focus of the camera. This requires lengthy practice which must be paid for at union rates. Add to this the expenditure for scenery, props, equipment and the high salaries to big staffs of technicians and producers, and it becomes apparent why this is no small timers' game.

## Vision Not Always a Help

Although broadcasters admit that most of the programmes heard over the air to-day may eventually be televised, they insist that there will always be a demand for the conventional sound programme. A lecture on philosophy, for example, needs no pictures to make it more effective. Also, a two hour concert of the New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra will please the music lovers just as much, without trick shots of the camera showing close-ups of the maestro's hands or panoramic views of Carnegie Hall.

Another point in favour of the survival of present-day radio in some form is that

it demands far less concentration than television. A housewife, washing dishes in her kitchen, may listen to an exciting serial emanating from a receiver in the next room, or a family group, in the evening, may have its set turned on while reading or playing bridge. Such casual eavesdropping will not suffice for the visual form of entertainment. First, the room must be darkened, then the listener-spectator must sit or stand close to the set, giving undivided attention to the images produced by the cathode ray tube on the tiny screen.

## Anxiety in Hollywood

Hollywood, just as Radio City, is putting up a brave front but it, too, cannot disguise its concern. All television entertainment, as seen over the receiver, is in itself a species of the motion pictures. So it's not surprising that broadcasters are planning to fill a considerable part of their schedules with the showing of films. NBC, in the New York area, is televising twenty-three hours of movies, ranging from newsreels, cartoons, old issues of "The March of Time," to condensed versions of old features, such as "Gunga Din."

Already experimental telecasting, both in America and in England, has shown that news broadcasts are by far the most popular of all televised items. If these reflections of real life are of such major interest to the looker-in of to-day, when even the best receivers display pictures on a "Screen" only seven and one-half by ten inches, how much more will they attract that spectator in the near future, when the images will be reproduced on a full-sized home picture screen?

Politicians are losing no time in the charting of the inevitable role of sight broadcasting in public affairs. If not in 1940, then surely by 1944, not only the microphone personality but also the photogenic quality of a candidate may be a vital consideration in his election.

## New Technique For Orators

For this new medium, orators will have to acquire a new technique, one combining force with a restrained manner. The hand-waving, hammy style of spellbinding, already considerably subdued by the radio, appears unspeakably ridiculous over the home receiver. The handsome candidate, but not necessarily the best looking one, will have a definite advantage. Good physique, clearly defined features, a strong chin and flashing eyes will sway many voters, especially feminine ones. Mere logic will have a harder fight than ever.

Much sooner, however, than in politics, visual broadcasting will bring changes in its two allied fields of entertainment, radio and movies.

## Legitimate Stage Safe

Just as Hollywood took over, advantageously, certain categories of plays from the theatre (mystery stories, thrillers, obvious farces and spectacular presentations), so will television, in the long run, lay claim to the boy-meets-girl formula and other stencils of the movies.

As for the legitimate stage, most likely it will be the least affected of any of the amusement enterprises. Its patrons, despite the multitude of good radio programmes, will not be kept away by television. For a limited but highly cultivated group, the well written, expertly acted flesh and blood comedy or drama will always be the ultimate in dramatic entertainment.

## Newspapers Worried

Unlike those in the theatre, however, the big-wigs of the press are indulging in a display of old-fashioned breath-holding. But it must be said that no newspaper man, whether copy boy or publisher, believes the home picture receiver will ever supplant the daily newsprint. After all, the image on the television screen is but a fleeting vision. It demands the presence of the spectator at a specific place, at a specific time; and most persons cannot so restrict their movements as to be always within sight of a picture machine.

Even if one could see every news item flashed on a visual receiver, the chances are he would still be impelled to buy a newspaper. Those who have attended first nights of plays, sports exhibitions or witnessed accidents are invariably eager to seek confirmation of their impressions in the printed word. During the Munich crisis, radios of America blared forth the greatest amount of wordage ever devoted to a news agent. Yet, far from curtailing the sales of papers, circulations throughout the land jumped to record heights during this period.

## Changes In Style

Granting that television cannot destroy the dailies, some journalists believe it will bring about marked changes in newspaper content and style. The picture consciousness of the masses will develop to such a degree

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