

# Independents shoot back at 'Top 40' survey CONTINUED

the phrasing of the questionnaire, in the view of critics who issued comments to BROADCASTING last week.

Todd Storz, president of the Storz Stations, said the NBC Spot Sales survey technique "was the age-old method of asking a 'loaded question' to get a desired answer." He said his stations were unaware of any group or any station "that programs only the 'Top 40' Tunes."

Mr. Storz thought timebuyers had been subjective, permitting their own tastes to color their viewpoints, and he compared the timebuyer spending the bulk of his client's money on music and news stations, although enjoying at times listening to a network station, to a space buyer putting the client's money into the *New York Daily News* because of its wide circulation though preferring personally to read the *New York Times*.

"At times," Mr. Storz asserted, "it seems that nobody likes our programming but the listeners."

Gordon McLendon, president of the McLendon group, found the survey "negative" and warned it could "damage both NBC and the entire radio industry." He suggested NBC seek "affirmatively" to "regain its lost stature by better programming instead of criticizing competitor networks or independents."

"With intelligent planning," Mr. McLendon asserted, "there may yet be found a way for NBC Radio to survive."

Harold D. Krelstein, president of the Plough radio stations, observed that the printed results of the NBC Spot Sales time-buyer poll "tend to prove conclusively that NBC Spot Sales was obviously trying to build a case in defense of the network stations it represents. And to that extent it has failed." He said there were more holes in the questions and answers than "in a piece of Swiss cheese."

Gerald Bartell of the Bartell group, disclaiming any identification with the stylized Top 40 category, held "any survey geared to a predetermined conclusion adds nothing to the body of competent research." He noted "Radio's best people—in management, programming, talent—are now in modern radio. Network radio has been pauperized of personnel [and] . . . is fighting a furious rear-guard action." He said "no amount of network salesmanship or slick public relations can deny that modern radio in every major market has a larger adult audience by far than its network competition."

Adam Young, president of Adam Young Inc., station representative, issued a lengthy statement that was peppered with such observations as: "NBC is still in the radio business because with their usual efficiency they forgot to bury the body;" the study is NBC's "own best evidence that this one-time leader in the industry is now running scared."

Mr. Young said, "NBC's obvious rigging device in this survey has been to oversimplify very complex problems of programming."

Arthur H. McCoy, executive vice president of John Blair & Co., station representa-

tive firm, said he "seriously" questioned the "true cross-section character of the panel."

Mr. McCoy noted that the Blair company would soon issue to advertisers and agencies a report on local radio programming to help them "better understand the many facets of programming . . . [although] too many selfish parties . . . have muddied up the water." He charged the panel survey to be one "rigged for the selfish aims of the networks." He said an important ingredient "not even mentioned" was "station ownership and management," which, he said, is considered first by timebuyers "who are up to date on the complicated business of local programming."

Morris Kellner, vice president in charge of radio sales at The Katz Agency station representative, charged the "labels" in the questionnaire to timebuyers to be "loaded" and "anyone could have told how the answers would have come out considering this wording."

Here, in greater detail, are the comments of those quoted above:

☉☉ We are convinced that the size of a station's audience closely parallels the entertainment value of the programming content offered. At times it seems that nobody likes our programming but the listeners.☉☉

**TODD STORZ, president of Storz Stations (WHB Kansas City, WQAM Miami, WTIX New Orleans, WDGW Minneapolis):**



The [NBC Spot Sales] survey technique used, obviously, was the age-old method of asking a "loaded question" to get a desired answer. For example, the survey divides music stations into two categories: One—"Top 40 Tunes-Stations

that primarily feature current top tunes, generally the top 40 hits of the day." Two—"Standard Music and News-Stations that feature standard as well as current pop tunes and thus cater to a wider variety of popular musical tastes."

It is obvious that the second category of stations would be preferred by most timebuyers because the questions themselves lead to that conclusion. But even more important is the fact that I am unaware of any group operator whose stations would fall into the programming definitions defined as Category One.

Certainly, speaking for ourselves, our stations would definitely fall into the second category. We are unaware of any group or station that programs only the Top 40 Tunes, and actually we think it would be difficult to find any station in the country that would fall exclusively into the first category, particularly bearing in mind that to fit the first category the station could not carry any newscasts since news is completely excluded from the program definition in the

first category and included in the second. It would be possible to follow through with an analysis of all of the questions asked in the survey to show how utterly ridiculous and self-serving they are.

The latest diatribe against modern radio comes from the very same typewriters that several years ago forecast the impending and unavoidable death of radio. One does not have to be part elephant to remember that the distinguished General Sarnoff of NBC quite un-prophetically wrote the "obituary" on radio. There was a mass burial, in large cities and small hamlets from coast to coast, when he buried am radio.

The networks picked up their kilocycles and stole stealthily away in the face of tv's competition. The independent operators picked up the ball and have been running with it ever since. If they had waited for the networks to retrieve the ball, the death the nets had diagnosed would have been a stark reality. The networks have been following their hastily summoned hearse ever since.

Profitability of radio station operation in 1956 (latest figures available) is shown clearly in FCC official data released last January. Non-network owned stations showed a 21.7% increase in profits, but the profits of the four national and three regional networks and their 19 owned stations combined were off one-third.

Nor do profits fully show the story. Let's look at ratings. Five or six years ago the independent station that was rated in the top three or four in its market was looked upon as a phenomenon. Old-line network stations usually ran one-two with the rest of the competition jockeying for the third spot.

## Measures of Success

However, let's look at the situation now in some of the nation's top markets. The most recent C. E. Hooper Inc. figures show:

(a) In New York, right under the guns of the NBC Brass, the top indie has over twice the audience share of the NBC flagship.

(b) In Chicago, the top indie has over three times the share of audience of the NBC station.

(c) In Philadelphia, the top indie has a fraction under three times the share of audience of the NBC station.

(d) In Boston, the top indie has over eight times the share of audience of the NBC station.

(e) In Pittsburgh, the top indie has almost seven times the share of audience of the NBC station.

Aggressive music and news operators have rebuilt radio from its near calamity in the early 50's to its present salubrious condition today.

Almost every survey of a major market shows audience leadership is with the alert music and news stations. So we have a question of the "haves" and "have nots." Since the "have nots" certainly intend to try to stay in business, it stands to reason that they have to have some arguments in favor of their type of programming, and some