

Sponsor backstage

Disk Jockey Rebellion

Did you ever buy a radio spot in a newscast or weather report? How would you have liked to have your product presented immediately preceding or following this:

"In our town today, folks, the temperature is nine degrees below zero, so get those brass monkeys off the front lawns fast. . . ."



This is a little episode tossed out by Varner Paulsen, program director of radio station WIP, Philadelphia, in the course of a panel discussion in which he participated at the first annual convention of popular disk jockeys in Kansas City, Mo., over the weekend of March 7, 8, 9.

I said in my last BACKSTAGE remarks that the developments at this convention could have an important bearing on the effectiveness of millions of dollars worth of air advertising. I want to revise that statement with a one word change: Not "could have an important bearing," "will have an important bearing." And the bearing it will have will be determined by how station management copes or fails to cope with the simmering rebellion indicated by the brass monkey yarn.

Formula programing vs. the ad lib personality

All through the weekend it became increasingly clear that a substantial number of disk jockeys were of the deep conviction that so-called formula radio (top 40, et al) is making faceless, mindless, personality-less robots of the potentially great performers called disk jockeys.

This was expressed in every shade from the calm, soft greens of Jack Lacey of WINS, New York, to the violent, passionate purple of Stan Dale of WAIT, Chicago. Lacey told his audience that he was a realist rather than an idealist, that it was his simple objective to please his employer while at the same time retaining and developing as much of his individual personality as possible, within the bounds of the kind of job his employer asked of him. Dale, on the other hand, flatly and repeatedly stated that "station managements who utilize formula radio are afraid to let the disk jockey get too popular. They're afraid he'll ask for a raise. . . ."

Dale carried on so vehemently and repeatedly on this that Storz' national program director Bill Steward, who was moderating the panel (as well as most other panels during the meets) firmly told him: ". . . that's enough of that thing you've got with the Plough stations, Stan. . . ." But the subject came up in a number of the panel discussions, and in off-the-record talks I had with quite a few jockeys it was clear that jockeys are gravely concerned with what they believe to be a management program policy, which will eventually destroy them as personalities in their own rights.

How long this rebellion continues, as I said . . . or how successful or unsuccessful it actually turns out to be will have a direct and stringent bearing on the shape of the programing which thousands of spot advertisers support. And the success or failure of the re-



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