

AMBITIOUS ABC PLANNING INITIATED UNDER NEW MERGED OWNERSHIP

A revitalized ABC, fired with new strength from its merger with United Paramount, already is firming up its plans that will drastically affect the network field as well as other phases of the broadcast industry. It won't necessarily be a quick transformation, but ABC has definitely stated its intention to be a leader in the field . . . growing "like an oak."

PLANS for transfusing United Paramount's lusty millions into the run-down body of ABC were set in motion last week immediately upon receipt of the long-awaited signal from FCC (also see stories following).

Goal and purpose of officials of both companies was to raise ABC to the competitive stature, alongside the other networks, which FCC said would be the result when it handed down its multi-sided final decision approving the \$25 million merger of ABC and United Paramount Theatres last Monday.

More and bigger affiliates, new talent, new programs—these were immediate objectives of the new company, American Broadcasting-Paramount Theatres Inc., in its efforts not only to make the ABC "home broadcasting" division competitive, but, if possible, to build it into the paramount network organization.

It would take a while. This was the theme of official pronouncements. For competitive reasons, executives said, blueprints could not be made public until details were set. But they promised developments would begin materializing with regularity, starting shortly.

Special Meeting Feb. 26-27

First real details of the battle plan are expected to be disclosed to members of the ABC Stations Advisory Committees at a special meeting called for Feb. 26-27 in New York. Officials of AB-PT and its ABC division, who talked with affiliates via closed circuit on Thursday, will meet with the TV Stations Advisory Committee on Feb. 26 and with Radio Stations Advisory Committeemen on the following day.

In broad outline, first consideration is two-pronged—lining up of stations and clearing of time, a dual problem which concededly would need the assistance of programs that could compete more solidly with those of other networks.

In one attack on this problem Leonard H. Goldenson, who headed United Paramount Theatres and becomes president of AB-PT, and Robert E. Kintner, who continues as president of ABC in its new status as an AB-PT division, plan a talent-hunt trip to the West Coast within about a month.

The search for new talent and new programs also will have the continuing aid of Robert M. Weitman, a veteran showman and star "discoverer" and a UPT vice president, who be-

comes ABC vice president in charge of programming and talent.

There has been speculation that with the estimated \$25-to-\$31 million resources available from UPT, ABC in its drive to line up new TV affiliates might offer additional compensation features as special inducements and possibly touch off an "affiliation war" among networks in the style of the CBS-NBC talent raids



THE TWO chief executives of the new AB-PT have experience in working together. Edward J. Noble (r), chairman of the finance committee of AB-PT, has served as general chairman of the 1953 Greater New York campaign of the National Foundation for Infan-

tile Paralysis, and Leonard Goldenson (l), president of AB-PT, has been chairman of the New York motion picture industry's part of the March of Dimes. Here Mr. Goldenson presents a check for \$49,328.67 which his committee raised to help fight polio.

of a few years ago. ABC officials gave no hint of plans of this nature, but did make it clear that they are out to build a network on a parity with its rivals in all respects, radio and television, and were working toward a stronger station lineup than before the merger. Aside from programming, sales, and general development plans, they expect the fact that the merger is now a reality will itself make stations more interested.

Spokesmen said they already—even before the merger was approved—had discerned a

trend among new TV stations to sign with ABC. They expect it to continue, but, as one official pointed out, progress in that direction will be somewhat beyond ABC's control in one respect—that is, it will depend in part upon the rate at which FCC licenses new stations.

Additionally, in most of the major markets where ABC affiliations are especially desired by the network, there are more applicants than channels, meaning drawn-out hearings and unpredictable delays. ABC now has an 81-station TV network and 355 radio affiliates.

To improve its TV facilities, ABC plans to spend \$2.5 million to boost its five owned stations to maximum power. Timetable calls for completion of this project by about 1954.

Goldenson's Goals

AB-PT President Goldenson listed the goals as "more entertaining, interesting and informative programs," but quickly added that "it will, of course, take time." ABC President Kintner, while describing the merger as affording ABC "the potential of more rapid and greater growth in the home broadcasting field," also cautioned

that "to achieve our high goals we must proceed slowly in order to build soundly and in a business-like manner" (for texts of these and other statements, see stories following).

In the same tone, ABC said in newspaper and trade advertisements immediately following the merger that "new programs will be developed. New stars will be attracted. New techniques will be introduced. New facilities will be developed. Not tomorrow, of course. Not next week, or next month. But ABC intends to be a leader in radio and television, and it in-