POWER PLAYS TAKE SHAPE IN TELEVISION NETWORKING

- NBC buys WKNB-TV New Britain, its first uhf
- CBS-TV affiliations go to Gene Autry, Storer
- DuMont begins adjusting to trimmed operations

**FIRST UHF FOR NBC**

Bulletin: NBC late Friday bought WKNB-AM-TV New Britain, Conn., for $666,000, contingent upon FCC approval of the sale and the move of the tv transmitter to Mt. Highy near Middletown, Conn. The network plans to boost the ch. 30 station to a million watts.

NBC last week was negotiating to buy ch. 30 WKNB-TV New Britain, Conn., which would become the network's first owned television station in the uhf band.

WKNB-TV is now the CBS-TV affiliate for the New Britain-Hartford area.

If NBC purchases the uhf outlet, new power plays between NBC-TV and CBS-TV will be inevitable.

Such a purchase would mean that NBC would have no further interest in the outcome of the contest for ch. 3 in Hartford between Hartford Telecasting Co. and Travelers Broadcasting Co., owned by WTIC Hartford. WTIC is one of NBC's oldest radio affiliates.

With NBC owning a uhf outlet in the Hartford area, the winner of the ch. 3 contest presumably would hope to affiliate with CBS. One of the principals and proposed general manager of Hartford Telecasting Co., WTIC's opposition in the case, is Harry C. Butcher, wartime naval aide to Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower and pre-war Washington vice president of CBS.

The network position of ch. 8 WNHC-TV New Haven, the only other uhf assignment in Connecticut, would also be in question. WNHC-TV is now affiliated with both CBS-TV and NBC-TV. About 40% of its network programs are CBS-uhf and 45% NBC-uhf.

WNHC-TV, now operating at maximum power of 316 kw, has its transmitter some 26 air miles from Hartford and throws a strong signal into that population center.

Negotiations between NBC and Julian Gross, president and principal stockholder of WKNB-TV, have been in progress for several weeks. Points of difference were said to be still unresolved. One source close to the negotiations said that NBC was hoping to make an arrangement contingent upon FCC approval of a move of the WKNB transmitter site to Mt. Highy, a commanding elevation south of Hartford and some 23 air miles north of New Haven.

Such a contingency would not be unlike that which was attached to the purchase by CBS-TV of WSTV-TV Steubenville, Ohio, for $3 million. That deal will be closed only if the FCC approves the move of the ch. 9 station to the Pittsburgh area (BT, Nov. 22, 1954).

For political reasons NBC probably will seek an early conclusion to the WKNB-TV negotiations, it was believed. The network hopes to have at least one uhf acquisition or application in the bag before forthcoming Senate committee investigations get underway.

As matters stand, two major investigations of communications, with emphasis on television networking, are set—one by the Senate Interstate & Foreign Commerce Committee and the other by the equally powerful Senate Judiciary Committee (see story, page 73). In both, it will be to the advantage of networks to show that they are extending helping hands to uhf, a service that already has been presented to the Senate as the poverty row of tv.

CBS-TV already has contracted for one uhf. Its purchase of ch. 19 WOKY-TV Milwaukee for a total investment of $835,000 (BT, Nov. 22, 1954) awaits FCC approval.

Assuming NBC acquires WKNB-TV, it will have only one more uhf to go before filling its television portfolio of five v's and two u's. The network now owns the limit of five vhf's, WRCA-TV New York, WBNQ-TV Chicago, WNBA (TV) Cleveland, WING-TV Washington and KRCA-TVP Los Angeles.

CBS owns WCBS-TV New York, WBBM-TV Chicago and KNXT (TV) Los Angeles. Assuming its purchases of Steubenville's ch. 9 and Milwaukee's ch. 19 go through, CBS will be able to acquire one more v and another u. Selection of its second uhf station is expected to follow NBC's first uhf deal. Frank Stanton,