

...Pay TV

(Continued From Page 1) operation the subscribing families were spending an average of \$2 per week, but during the summer the average dropped to \$1.

A new survey in October found the average family was spending about 80 cents a week, with about two-thirds of them using their pay TV system at least once a week.

But no one is willing to guess whether the long range participation is going to be great enough to insure the continuation of the high level programming. Telemeter lost money on the Bob Newhart experiment but believes a profit is possible with a system of less than twice the size of Etobicoke.

A "BROADCAST" system on Pay TV on a much grander scale will get under way in Hartford, Conn., this fall.

RKO General has been granted approval by the Federal Communications Commission to initiate a Phonovision plan, which will reach as many as 50,000 subscribers in a three-year experiment.

Each subscriber will have a special decoder attached to his TV set, and coins will be inserted to unscramble a picture being broadcast over WHCT-TV, Channel 18, Hartford.

THE STATION proposed to telecast 40 hours of fee programs weekly (17 hours unduplicated), and 30 hours of free programs.

The basic fare will be motion picture film, although legitimate stage plays — necessarily de-spiced in many instances — opera, ballet, symphonies, sports events, and special children's programs are also envisioned.

The plan approved by the FCC calls for a maximum \$10 installation fee, and a 75 cents per week rental. Program costs to the subscriber would range from \$3.50 for a Broadway play-down to 25 cents for a children's program. Movie costs are expected to be between 75 cents and \$1.50.

RKO GENERAL estimates it will lose \$1 million in the three year test, even if 50,000 subscribers spend at least \$2.50 per week. Remember, in Toronto the average expenditure is about 80 cents per week.

The Hartford plan was vigorously opposed by the Connecticut theater owners and the National Assn. of Broadcasters. The salient points of their objections were:

- Free TV would die. Dr. Frank Stanton of CBS stated, "Television cannot endure half free and half fee."
- The public would be deprived of or have to pay for programs that are now free.
- Prices are too high.
- Severe economic injury would be sustained by the regular movie houses.

THE COUNTER arguments are, as in the case of RKO General, "It's not our intention to deprive the area of regular TV programs by outbidding conventional TV for the rights."

They also cite that Pay TV would not have commercials. That's about where Pay TV stands today.

It's a healthy thing that Pay TV is going to get a fair chance, and it may make a big difference to all of television.

BUT THE BIG imponderable in my mind is whether or not the program quality on the whole will be that much better. The simple existence of a Pay TV system doesn't insure that new reservoirs of creative talent will be tapped. There still exists pretty much the same writers, producers, and directors to draw from, and the backers of the systems will be under the same pressures at the networks to appeal to the largest possible audience.

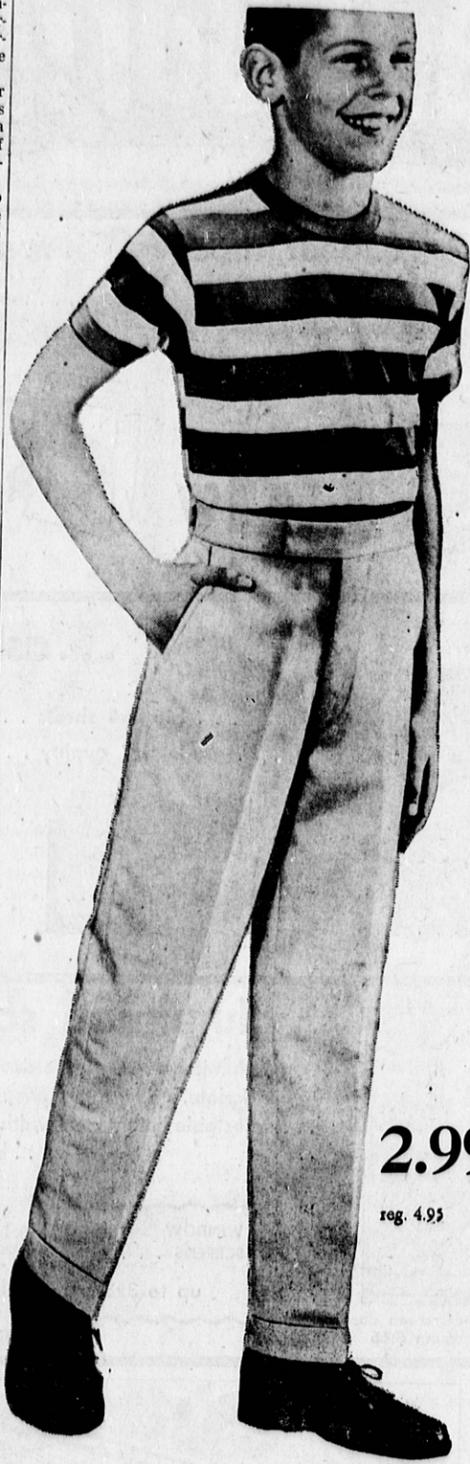
And even if the programs are much better will enough people pay to see them to keep Pay TV profitable and available after the novelty has worn off?

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TH 358  
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 The undersigned does certify he is conducting a business at 2605 West 179th Street, Torrance, California, under the fictitious firm name of **PARCO COMPANY** and that said firm is composed of the following person, whose name in full and place of residence is as follows:  
 Jake P. Roth, Jr.  
 2605 West 179th Street,  
 Torrance, California.  
 Dated July 13, 1961.  
 (Signature) Jake P. Roth, Jr.  
 State of California, Los Angeles County.  
 On July 13, 1961, before me, a Notary Public in and for said State, personally appeared Jake P. Roth, Jr. known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged he executed the same.  
 (SEAL) Marjorie B. Kibbe  
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 My commission expires August 23, 1964.  
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