

AFM CALLS STRIKE IN HOLLYWOOD

The overall picture in labor-management relations was somber last week as networks and other industry groups attempted to reconcile differences with various unions on new contracts.

The most drastic action was by the American Federation of Musicians, which ordered Los Angeles Local 47 to strike against major film producing companies in Hollywood in a dispute centering largely around payment to Musicians of fees for feature films released to tv.

The Screen Actors Guild was reported to be considering a strike move against the nation's producers of tv film commercials. SAG's contract expires March 1 and an impasse has been reached in talks with producers over the past month [PERSONNEL RELATIONS, Jan. 20].

Network negotiators meanwhile have been trying to reach agreements with their technical unions (National Assn. of Broadcast Employers & Technicians at NBC and ABC and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers at CBS). Formal discussions have ended with NABET but the union was in the process of submitting NBC's and ABC's proposals to its membership for ratification [PERSONNEL RELATIONS, Feb. 10]. CBS and IBEW concluded negotiations Jan. 31, when the network made what it considered its "final offer." Both sides have agreed to renegotiate but last week no date was set for resumption of contract talks.

The Writers Guild of America last week opened its negotiations for contracts covering staff news and continuity writers at ABC, CBS and NBC and for freelance writers. WGA reportedly is seeking an average 15% increase in wages, plus guarantees covering the "inviolability" of freelance scripts [PERSONNEL RELATIONS, Feb. 17]. In this latter connection, WGA's position is that if a script writer's material is altered and is then "panned" by the critics, the writer is entitled to monetary compensation for "damages." The network reaction is described as "very cool." The present pact expires March 31.

The AFM strike was ordered by the union's international executive board against major film producers in Hollywood last Wednesday, but the action is not expected to affect the production of tv film programs or commercials. A formal resolution directed Local 47 to strike at Columbia Pictures, Loew's Inc., Paramount Pictures, 20th Century-Fox and Warner Bros. The move was taken by the union after a deadlock in contract negotiations between the Assn. of Motion Picture Producers and AFM in New York, which had been underway since Feb. 10. The old four-year contract expired last Wednesday.

An AFM spokesman said the strike was called because unresolved issues over wages and other working conditions persisted throughout the talks. Studio musicians earn \$5,000 to \$8,500 per year, he added. It was reported one major obstacle was that producers and the union could not agree on a formula for fees to be paid to musicians on theatrical films released to tv.

Producers have objected vigorously to paying 5% of gross tv revenues of pre-1948 films released to tv and want this percentage reduced. The producers also have declined commitments on post-1948 films made available to free tv and, eventually, to pay tv.

The strike apparently will have no effect on tv film commercials since the bulk of the music is provided in New York. On tv film programs, producers are fairly well set for this season and conceivably could use music sound tracks made in Mexico or use music libraries if the strike continues several months.

The Screen Actors Guild board of directors was to meet in Los Angeles Friday to decide whether it should seek strike authorization from its members. Though commercial producers and SAG have agreed to meet in Los Angeles later this week, the union apparently feels a strike authorization will strengthen its bargaining position.

In its original proposals, SAG sought wage hikes ranging up to 100% and reclassification of the use payments system governing commercials. Though SAG has modified its demands, producers still maintain the union's proposals are "excessive."

The SAG contract has ramifications for advertising agencies, whose clients ultimately must foot the bill, and for networks, who deplore any substantial cost increases that contribute to the overall expense of using tv. Though the SAG contract is made with producers, agencies are signatories and have participated in the New York discussions.

WGAW May Cancel Movie Pacts To Enforce Toll Tv Pay Demands

Writers Guild of America, West, may pull its screen writer members out of all the motion picture studios in November to enforce its demands for additional payment to writers of theatrical pictures which are released for use on toll tv. Following refusal by the motion picture producers to recognize the writers' interests in this field, the Screen Writers Branch voted to cancel WGAW agreements with the movie studios at the earliest possible legal date, which WGAW put at Nov. 6, 1958.

More immediate is the WGAW cancellation of its agreement with Republic Pictures, as a result of that studio's release of a group of theatrical films made after Aug. 1, 1948, to NBC-TV without arranging for extra compensation for the writers of the 140 pictures involved [PERSONNEL RELATIONS, Jan. 27]. And in April similar action for the same reason will be taken against a group of unidentified independent producers releasing through United Artists.

The board of the Tv-Radio Branch of WGAW has voted to write letters to tv stations which have been cutting credits from syndicated tv films to make time for extra commercials, pointing out that this practice is unfair to the program's sponsor as well as the writers deprived of their credits. If stations persist, the guild plans to notify the sponsors.

WGN-TV Gets Hot News From 'Trib'

The engineering department of WGN-TV Chicago has installed a permanent coaxial cable from the city room of the *Chicago Tribune*, its affiliate, for the series, *First Edition*. The newspaper's reporters and specialists appear from time to time on the program with developments on fast-breaking stories.

The program is scheduled for tv immediately after the *Tribune's* first edition goes to press at 5:30 p. m. Edward J. Roth, WGN-TV program manager, said, "This electronic link will make possible a closer working relationship between WGN-TV and the *Tribune* in the handling of the latest news for television at this important hour of the day."

Exercises Out, Polkas In on WPOW

After a letter was received by WPOW New York from a listener requesting morning polka music "to help her dance those pounds away," the station started programming *Pajama Polka Party* (Mon.-Sat. 6-7 a.m.). Listeners are asked to send snapshots of themselves doing the polka in their pajamas. The person who sends in the most amusing picture will be given a \$25 government bond, WPOW reports. Runners-up receive a photo of the show's host, Johnny Bud, attired for the morning polka in a nightgown and cap.

WAKE Promotes Holiday on Ice

A special family night performance of "Holiday on Ice" Feb. 17 was promoted by WAKE Atlanta with a "family bucks" campaign. For two weeks before the performance, the station informed listeners that a certificate worth a discount of \$1 on tickets for the show would be sent to those applying for it. A capacity crowd of 5,000 turned out despite the coldest weather in Atlanta for nearly two decades, it was reported after the event.

Film on Theodore Roosevelt

The Defense Dept. has cleared for public non-profit showing on television the 25-minute documentary film, "Theodore Roosevelt—American," it was announced last week by the Theodore Roosevelt Centennial Commission, New York. The film was produced by the Armed Forces Office of Information & Education in cooperation with the centennial commission and the Theodore Roosevelt Assn.

WDGY to Carry Canoe Race, Game

The Minneapolis Aquatennial, one of America's largest summer civic festivities, and WDGY there are co-sponsoring a "Paul Bunyan Canoe Derby" July 8, in connection with Minnesota's centennial celebrations. The Derby officials are purchasing 100 canoes for the attraction which is expected to draw well over that number of teams from all parts of the world. The teams will compete for a \$4,000 first prize and prize