

## Television by Middle Way

One of Europe's most progressive countries is also one of the most backward in the development of television. This paradoxical situation obtains in Sweden, a country often pointed to as a model of progressiveness both technologically and culturally.

The story behind the lag in television is one of bureaucratic negativism and the failure of governmental and commercial interests to come to an agreement. It was hoped that a new proposal presented to the Swedish government in January 1956 by representatives of Swedish trade and industry would end the stalemate. The compromise plan, based partly on studies made

by the Swedish Institute for Economic and Social Research, provided for joint financing by government and private interests and governmental supervision of commercial programs. If the plan were approved it would make television accessible to more than two million viewers in three of Sweden's largest cities within a year.

Unfortunately for the success of the plan, the Swedish Minister of Communications promptly introduced a bill (February 9) rejecting commercial television, providing for State monopoly, limiting telecasting to the Stockholm area and setting license fees at \$15.00 per receiver. The bill described the compromise plan as "over optimistic."

Sweden's television story began in 1947

when a joint committee of State officials and representatives of private firms was formed to explore the possibilities of television in Sweden. The committee decided to build an experimental TV transmitter in Stockholm. In 1950 the Swedish Board of Telegraphs and the Swedish State Broadcasting Co. asked the government for a grant of 2.2 million crowns (about \$440,000) for the purchase of experimental equipment. The government refused the grant. Instead, a State commission was appointed the following year to inquire into television.

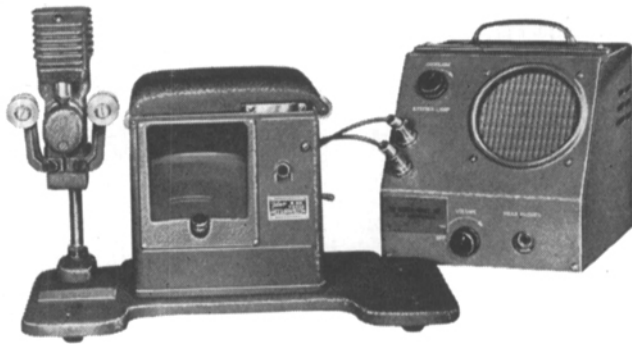
In 1952, the commission asked the Government for funds to start some television activities in 1954. The Government said, "No." The following year a group representing private interests asked the Government for permission to start an independent commercial TV station where the emphasis would be on cultural programs. The Government again refused. A proposal for a nation-wide network, based on a lengthy report from the commission, was presented to the Swedish parliament in 1955, but was tabled. In 1954 a Swedish film producer was granted permission to stage a commercial "television week," with the aim of demonstrating the social and cultural value of TV, but a request to continue the broadcasts on an experimental basis for six months was refused. In June 1954, the Government withdrew the right it had granted the Board of Tele-communications to permit TV broadcasts, and allowed the State Radio Co. 450,000 crowns from license funds to conduct television research. Experimental programs of one or two hours a week were introduced by State Radio on Oct. 9, 1954, a few days before the publication of a lengthy report from the Government commission created in 1951.

The 1956 compromise plan on which industry bases its hopes seems reasonable enough. One of its provisions that would be approved by at least a few Americans limits advertising to a maximum of 10% of the total viewing time of any program, and advertising would be permitted only at the beginning and end of a program. However, the consent of the Swedish Government to even a modified program that would open the door to commercial TV seems far from assured. And a few thousand Swedes who live in the southern part of the country are viewing Danish broadcasts and those who live in and near the Capitol may view the experimental programs sent out by State Radio while the perhaps irresistible force of industrial progress struggles with apparently immovable bodies of government.—*R.H.* (From information from the Swedish Industriens Presstjänst)

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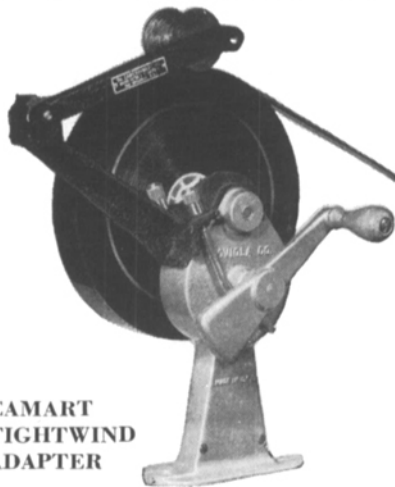
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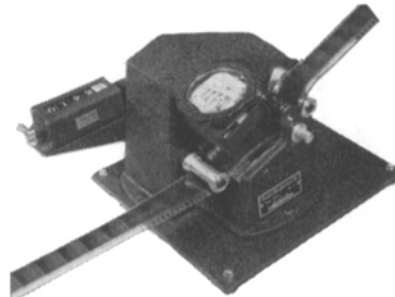
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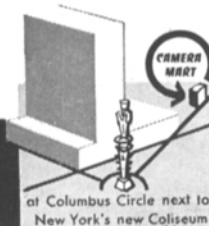
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