

The National Association of Broadcasters

1760 N STREET, N. W. * * * * * WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

No. 7

SPECIAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

July 23, 1943

Labor Transcriptions

Transcriptions offered to stations at commercial rates by the United Automobile Workers and CIO necessitates consideration of the NAB Code of Ethics, with respect to the following provisions:

Controversial Public Issues

"As part of their public service, networks and stations shall provide time for the presentation of public questions including those of controversial nature. Such time shall be allotted with due regard to all the other elements of balanced program schedules and to the degree of public interest in the questions to be presented. Broadcasters shall use their best efforts to allot such time with fairness to all elements in a given controversy.

"Time for the presentation of controversial issues shall not be sold, except for political broadcasts. There are three fundamental reasons for this refusal to sell time for public discussion and, in its stead, providing time for it without charge. First, it is a public duty of broadcasters to bring such discussion to the radio audience regardless of the willingness of others to pay for it. Second, should time be sold for the discussion of controversial issues, it would have to be sold, in fairness, to all with the ability and desire to buy at any given time. Consequently, all possibility of regulating the amount of discussion on the air in proportion to other elements of properly balanced programming or of allotting the available periods with due regard to listener interest in the topics to be discussed would be surrendered. Third, and by far the most important, should time be sold for the discussion of controversial public issues and for the propagation of the views of individuals or groups, a powerful public forum would inevitably gravitate almost wholly into the hands of those with the greater means to buy it.

"The political broadcasts excepted above are any broadcasts in connection with a political campaign in behalf of or against the candidacy of a

legally qualified candidate for nomination or election to public office, or in behalf of or against a public proposal which is subject to ballot. This exception is made because at certain times the contending parties want to use and are entitled to use more time than broadcasters could possibly afford to give away.

"Nothing in the prohibition against selling time for the presentation of controversial issues shall be interpreted as barring sponsorship of the public forum type of program when such a program is regularly presented as a series of fair-sided discussions of public issues and when control of the fairness of the program rests wholly with the broadcasting station or network."

Manifestly any movement to influence public opinion on the subject of the actions of Congress is not "broadcasts in connection with a political campaign in behalf of or against the candidacy of a legally qualified candidate for nomination or election to public office, or in behalf of or against a public proposal which is subject to ballot." Therefore broadcasts of this nature should not be classed as political under the Code, nor should they be presented on paid time.

Station management should accept the responsibility of considering this matter as a controversial issue and allot time to both sides or schedule it on a public forum broadcast, if consistent with the public interest.

WILLARD D. EGOLF,
*Assistant to the President and
Acting Secretary to the Code
Compliance Committee*