

TALK WITH TV MEN PUT OFF BY REEDY

New Signs of Strain Appear
in White House Relations

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WASHINGTON, May 4—The White House postponed today a conference with the television networks on problems of covering President Johnson's frequent statements about international crises amid increasing signs of strained relations between the two sides.

Representatives of the American Broadcasting Company, Columbia Broadcasting System and National Broadcasting Company had arranged to meet at 3 P.M. today with George E. Reedy, the President's press secretary.

Mr. Reedy notified them this morning, however, that the pressure of other duties required a postponement. He said he hoped to reschedule the conference later this week.

Officially, network spokesmen accepted the explanation at face value. Unofficially, industry sources suspected that the postponement was motivated, at least in part, by other considerations.

Lack of Warning Cited

These sources said they had reason to believe that the White House was unhappy over the implications of news accounts of the projected conference. Articles, this morning in The New York Times and The New York Herald Tribune reported that the networks were concerned about the lack of advance notice at times and would appeal to Mr. Reedy for more warning to prepare for appearances by Mr. Johnson.

Network officials were said to be planning to explain to Mr. Reedy that the President's preilection for making addresses and announcements on short notice might be costing him maximum public attention besides posing procedural problems for the industry.

At the White House, industry sources said, this was apparently construed as criticism of the President's methods and

network officials were apparently suspected of inspiring it.

These sources suggested that the postponement might have reflected a desire by Mr. Reedy to avoid further publicity, aside from any pique over the implications on the news accounts.

The conference, to follow up of one held last Thursday, had been arranged by the networks' Washington news chiefs, Robert H. Fleming of A.B.C., William J. Small of C.B.S. and William E. Monroe-Jr. of N.B.C.

It was also to have been attended by Fred W. Friendly, president of C.B.S. News; Jesse Zousmer, vice president of A.B.C. News, and Julian Goodman, vice president of N.B.C. News. The three executives, all from New York, were here for an unrelated industry meeting.

The need for adequate advance notice of Presidential pronouncements is interlocked with other troublesome difficulties, a spokesman for the Washington news executives said.

A major subsidiary problem, he said, is the frequent lack of enough advance information to help the networks decide whether a statement warrants canceling commercial programs so that the President can be given live coverage, or whether his talk should be recorded for broadcast later.

He contended that the President should either request television time for live coverage or give the networks enough information on which to base "an editorial judgment" as to whether a given pronouncement warranted live coverage.

Barely Requests Time

A Presidential request for time is automatically honored by the networks, but Mr. Johnson rarely makes one. Instead, the White House advises the networks of a prospective speech or statement, leaving it to them to decide whether to broadcast it live, on tape or not at all.

Some television news officials were upset by another incident today, saying that it pointed up their problems.

The networks were notified only 15 minutes in advance that they would be allowed to give live coverage to a statement that the President intended to make at a meeting with Congressional leaders in the East Room.

It was impossible to set up the facilities in such a short time. The networks consequently recorded the statement for broadcast later.