

# Second Network Protected by Dodd

By Drew Pearson  
and Jack Anderson

The Metromedia TV chain was not the only one Sen. Tom Dodd (D-Conn.) protected from Senate investigation regarding televised violence and its effect on the youth of America. Another network, the National Broadcasting Company, also got immunity.

Sen. Dodd's staff on the Juvenile Delinquency subcommittee spent many hours screening the networks, prepared all sorts of material ready for the Senator to investigate. But when they were all ready to go, investigation of the two most violent TV groups just faded away. Something mysterious happened. Suddenly Sen. Dodd, chairman of the subcommittee, lost interest.

Television ranks second only to schools and the church in molding the youth of America. And five years ago this column vigorously applauded Sen. Dodd's start in probing TV sex and violence.

At that time—the autumn of 1961—Dodd's Juvenile Delinquency staff had prepared a damaging case. Chief counsel Paul L. Laskin and staff director Carl L. Perian summar-

ized their progress in a confidential memo to Dodd dated Oct. 25, 1961.

## Scorecard of Crime

"In our hearings thus far," they reported, "we have established that:

"Programs of the crime-detective, action-adventure, Western type increased from 15 per cent of total prime program time (7-11 p.m.) to over 50 per cent since 1955.

"The degree and intensity of the crime and violence within these programs has increased drastically.

"Over 20 million children watch television during these hours.

"The total time spent before the television set by children ranges from 20-60 hours a week.

"As many as five to eight million children under 17 watch such shows as 'The Untouchables,' 'Outlaws,' and so on every night of the week."

The memo also pointed out that "experts from several disciplines have testified as to the cumulative effect of so many children watching so much violence. Their feelings can be summarized by quoting Dr. Wilbur Schramm who testified, 'In view of our findings, the amount of violence on television is just too dangerous to go on.'"

The staff's biggest problem stated Laskin and Perian, was to pin down who was responsible for TV violence.

"While everyone tended to

blame everyone else for TV crime and violence," they reported to Dodd, "our record now shows that the writers are not directly responsible. They receive their orders in the form of 'program presentations' which implicitly or explicitly call for violence . . .

## Who Is to Blame?

"Through the process of subpoenaing documents relative to program decisions, we are now on the threshold of identifying the persons at not only NBC but ABC and CBS as well, who are responsible for crime and violence on television. We have plodded through 11 days of hearings to arrive at the point where we have eliminated all but top television network management.

"We can now focus public opinion and attention on the actual three-to-six men who are responsible for major program development . . . A further public exposure of the men at NBC, ABC and CBS could have a permanent, positive effect on the future makeup of network television."

Laskin and Perian warned Sen. Dodd, however, that, "A great public relations effort is being made by NBC to maintain the status quo. If we terminate hearings now, it is possible that all of our gains will be dissipated."

Unknown to the subcommit-

tee staff, NBC had already made a private approach to Dodd. The network had found an attorney in Philadelphia, Tom Meeker, who had once lived in Connecticut and knew the Senator personally.

Meeker buttonholed Dodd in the Capitol building on Sept. 16, 1961. Next day, he scribbled a personal note to the Senator on the stationery of the Mayflower Hotel. The note, intended for Dodd's eyes only, was slipped under the door of his Senate office.

"Dear Tom," wrote Meeker. "Thank you for seeing us yesterday. In my haste to give you the documents, I neglected to give you Mr. Sarnoff's reply to Mr. Kintner, which I enclose a copy of herewith. (Robert Sarnoff is NBC's board chairman; Robert Kinter was then NBC's president, is now a White House aide.)

"Mr. Sarnoff appreciated your willingness to hear his testimony in closed hearings," Meeker's letter continued, "and would prefer to make arrangements for the same subsequent to his return from Africa in about four weeks. In accordance with our chat yesterday, I will call you Monday afternoon."

Sen. Dodd not only obliged with closed hearings, but he completely suppressed any real probe of NBC. The balance of this inside story will follow shortly.

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