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**TV News Units Plan Specials
Upon Release of Nixon Tapes**

By LES BROWN

The news divisions of the television networks have begun planning for specials to be televised the week the White House tape recordings on the Watergate cover-up become available for air play, which they have been advised will be no sooner than Jan. 3 and, in any case, not until the cover-up trial ends.

The networks succeeded in their attempt to secure access to the recordings introduced in evidence in the trial when Judge Gerhard A. Gesell last week ruled, in United States District Court, that the tape exhibits were public documents and therefore public property. The tapes will be made available to commercial recording companies as well as to broadcasters.

But Judge Gesell had indicated that the release of the recordings would be held up until a method of reproducing them could be established that would assure fair and equitable distribution to those who had applied for access.

Heads of the network news divisions said yesterday that they would not race one another to be first on the air with specials based on the tapes, although they expected to play sample portions of the recordings on their evening newscasts the day they are released.

Assignments Are Made

Although cognizant of the problems in building a special for a visual medium upon aural materials and aware that many of the tapes may not be audible under broadcast conditions, the networks have each made assignments for the project.

Richard C. Wald, president of

NBC News, said Don Meaney, head of the Washington bureau, would be in charge of working out the general scheme and determining which tapes might be used. Carl Stern, who has been covering the trial for NBC, would be the reporter on the special.

Mr. Wald said the broadcast would not necessarily occur in prime time but might be more suitably scheduled at 11:30 P.M. He said there were still serious questions as to whether most of the tapes "would hold up for broadcast." He also held out the possibility that they might not be sufficient for a program.

The ABC special would be produced by Bob Siegenthaler and that of CBS by Russ Bensley, with David Schoumacher and Fred Graham having the respective reporting assignments.

The programs are considered tentative because of the possibility that lawyers for former President Richard M. Nixon may appeal Judge Gesell's decision.

William Sheehan, president of ABC News, said the ABC program was being planned initially from the written transcripts and that "ABC is inclined not to dramatize" the recordings on the screen. He indicated that the written text might be projected on the screen while the tapes were being played.

Mr. Wald said that NBC, for a visual accompaniment to the audio tapes, might use the sketches of the trial, with a running tape across the bottom of the screen carrying the transcript. SEE SFC

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