

CBS Schedules Haldeman Interviews

By LES BROWN

CBS News announced yesterday that it would pre-empt the March 23 and March 30 editions of "60 Minutes" for a pair of interviews with H. R. Haldeman, former White House chief of staff under President Nixon.

Unlike the Jan. 5 interview with G. Gordon Liddy, the convicted Watergate conspirator, the programs with Mr. Haldeman, who was also convicted for his role in the Watergate scandal, will not be identified with "60 Minutes" beyond occupying its 6 P.M. Sunday time period. The interviews were conducted in California last week by Mike Wallace, one of the hosts of the news-magazine series.

CBS News has compensated both Mr. Liddy and Mr. Haldeman for their exclusive appearances in amounts said by sources to be "in five figures." Network sources put Mr. Haldeman's fee at around \$25,000 for each program on him, which was also for the use of his home movies on Super 8 film, shot while he was at the White House. *

Bill Leonard, senior vice president of CBS News, said the "60 Minutes" time was selected because the network was unable to make other time periods available this month because of program and advertising commitments.

The news divisions of all three networks, lacking direct access to television time, except in their regularly scheduled programs, must ask the network managements to release time for news specials and the coverage of special events. Competitive factors and profit goals frequently influence decisions on creating additional time for news programs.

Although it is the most successful public affairs program in television, "60 Minutes" is forced to yield its Sunday time period approximately 17 weeks of the year to professional football.

A CBS executive said "60 Minutes" seemed "the most expendable program," and its time period a suitable one for the Haldeman programs. "We have to pre-empt our own news to put news on," he said.

Big '60 Minutes' Audience

The news-magazine program is having its best ratings season, reaching audiences comparable in size to some of the most popular prime-time entertainment shows.

It scored the highest rating in its history last Sunday, for a program that examined in one segment the game-show phenomenon in television. The rating of 20.2 indicated that more than 20 per cent of all television-equipped households in the United States had tuned

in. Against other programming on at the hour, it received 41 per cent of the available audience.

The programs with Mr. Haldeman have become controversial because of the disclosure that he had been paid for the interviews.

Presidents of the competing network news divisions criticized CBS for paying for the Haldeman interviews and James B. Reston, a columnist for The New York Times, wrote that if the practice were to spread, public officials and others might hold out for payment by the highest bidder.

In a letter to Mr. Reston, which he subsequently made available to others, Richard S. Salant, president of CBS News, defended the decision to pay for the interviews partly out of recognition "that we would be taking a very large amount of Haldeman's time."

Mr. Salant said that the actual filmed interview, which will be edited, ran six and a half hours. In addition, working discussions with Mr. Haldeman before the filming accounted for about 44 hours.

Mr. Salant said the total of more than 50 hours was approximately equivalent to the time Mr. Haldeman might have devoted to writing a magazine article. That extent of time, he said, "confirmed to me that the Haldeman project was different from the normal news interview."

*As broadcast, these movies consumed only about one minute of the two shows.