

RADIO ROUNDUP .

Dembo Takes The Reins At CBS News

___By STEVE KNOLL

Joseph T. Dembo, a 22-year CBS veteran who most recently served as news director and exec editor of radio network news, last week was named vice president of CBS News in charge of radio. Dembo replaces Emerson Stone, who held the position for 15 years before his recent appointment as v.p., news practices (serving as the division's "ombudsman.").

When Stone took over CBS Radio News in 1967, the man he succeeded was Dembo, who moved across town to Black Rock to turn then-ailing flagship WCBS-AM into an all-news station. As WCBS veep-general manager, he became the first newsman ever handed the reins of a network radio or tv O&O -- though once the -precedent was set, others followed.

In an address before the Radio Television News Directors Assn. last year, Dembo reflected on how the exec experience changes a newsman's perspective. Station management, he advised his fellow n.d.'s, "will extend your professional horizons ... And should you currently harbor a disdain for sales, and the misapprehension that it's easy to make a buck selling air time, it will haul you into the real world of commercial broadcasting."

When Dembo put together the WCBS exec team, he tapped Ed Joyce now CBS News exec vice president - as his first news director. But instead of selecting a new sales manager, he kept the one he inherited: Bob Hosking, today the president of CBS Radio.

While setting the station on its highly profitable all-news course, Dembo made some mistakes. He recalled, "I didn't think Mort Dean was good enough for WCBS. He has been known to remind me of that from time to time. I also told Jessica Savitch that she wouldn't make it on our air. So she went off to Texas and made it on somebody else's air."

From Rome To Home

After leaving WCBS in 1971, Dembo returned to the news division in a variety of assignments including manager of the Rome bureau, exec producer of the tv web's "Morning News"

Manpower Shortage

As far as discovering the Ed Murrows and Douglas Edwardses of tomorrow, "judging by the tapes that come streaming into this office, they are not out there under every rock," Dembo laments. And the problem seems even more acute for radio than tv, in view of the particular constellation of talents required.

The search for "good men and women to work in network news" appears to Dembo "seemingly without end. For me it has often been frustrating, tiring, puzzling and discouraging. Can it be that only a few of the many who dream of going into broadcast news know how to write for radio, know how to ask questions that are based on a passion for communicating information, know the basics of ~geography and political science, history and economics? Can it be that most of the others hope to find jobs with us because (a) there are 'fabulous' salaries to be picked up with relatively little effort, (b) many novels and films indicate that life is sweet and exciting and glamorous in network news, (c) working for a network news organization is simple. 'After all, I worked weekends as a disk jockey for the campus radio station, didn't I? "

Dembo summed up, "The motivation of many of the job candidates I see is murky, their ethical compass apparently out of order, their hunger for instant success all too obvious."

For observers concerned that changing times may lead to a compromising of standards that were set by men like Murrow and Paul White, the selection of Dembo, the youthful veteran, suggests that the radio side of CBS News is not about to abandon its traditions.

Variety Magazine 1982. Provided by Bob Gibson.