

PATHEFINDER

DIGEST OF  WORLD AFFAIRS

April 17, 1937

ON THE AIR

Unwritten Taboos

The men who write jokes for the radio were offered last week a compilation of the "Don'ts" which network executives are known to favor even though they have not gone so far as to order them inscribed as iron-clad rules. Gathered by Variety, weekly publication of the entertainment field, the taboo list contains such items as these:

- President Roosevelt is not to be mentioned. Sponsors tear their hair when gag writers seek to flash darts of humor about him.

- References to the Supreme Court are equally frowned upon. It is felt that many commercial sponsors have come in contact with the Court at some time or other and a misplaced joke might not sit well with their cases.

- Sit-down strikes may be mentioned but references to particular parties or companies involved are crossed out.

- Spain may be mentioned provided one doesn't mention the Loyalists, the Rebels, the generals or anything having to do with the war, which is equivalent to a general taboo.

- Hitler is not to be a subject of jokes, nor is the La Guardia incident to be mentioned. It is wise to leave untouched Mussolini and the remainder of the dictatorial contingent.

- Executives would prefer that the gag writers choose some other topic than the Dionne quintuplets but, if handled in moderation, the jokes may pass.

- Still under a rigid ban is any humorous remark pertaining to Edward Windsor and Mrs. Simpson.

As to using the names of actors and actresses, Variety has this to say: "It's okay to make references to Garbo's feet or Mae West's figure because this is counted as semi-advertising for the victim." Final "Don't" on the list is Congress with which is coupled this notation: "Never mention. This causes hysterics with sponsors similar to the conniptions over Roosevelt gags."