

TELEVISION AND RADIO

By JOHN CROSBY

Night People

It looks as if the day people have won again against the night people. Jean Shepherd, patron saint of the night people, who talks and only occasionally plays records over WOR, New York, from 1 to 5:30 a. m. seven days a week, is going off the air Aug. 13 because night people apparently don't buy things.



Crosby

Shepherd more or less invented the term night people and day people, and frequently on his four-and-a-half-hour nightly talkathon defines them. "There's a great body of people who flower at night, who feel night is their time.

Night is the time people truly become individuals, be-

cause all the familiar things are dark and done, all the restrictions on freedom are removed. Many artists work at night—it is peculiarly conducive to creative work. Many of us attuned to night are not artists but are embattled against the official, organized, righteous day people who are completely bound by their switchboards and their red tape." Day people, he says, invented red tape because they feel secure in it, because then they can blame not themselves but the system. "Night people like the quiet darkness; day people are terrified at suddenly becoming individuals, afraid to let the mind probe into unknown areas."

If you listen to Shepherd any length of time, you will find the night people definitely feel persecuted by the day people and get their biggest thrill when, if only for a moment, they can win a victory over them. Shepherd may tell a story of his Army days when a recruit, bored by physical training exercises, just walked off into a swamp, followed shortly by forty-five others, a revolt against authority deeply satisfying the night people.

Biggest coup of the night people—and Shepherd—to be invent a book which was designed to shake the faith of the day people in their "lists," their regimented lives. Out of hundreds of suggested titles, he picked, "I, Libertine." The non-existent author was named Frederick R. Ewing, "because it sounded official." Ewing even acquired a background—Oxford graduate, former "Manchester Guardian" correspondent, who had once delivered talks on the BBC on eighteenth century erotica. During the war Ewing was stationed on a minesweeper in the

North Atlantic, "because all British officers were on minesweepers in the North Atlantic during the war."

Presently night people began badgering book clerks for "I, Libertine" so persuasively that Ian Ballantine, himself a night person, of Ballantine Books, decided to publish such a book. So, "I, Libertine," by Frederick R. Ewing (ghost-written by Theodore Sturgeon and Jean Shepherd), will be published the middle of next month. Quite a coup for the night people.

When not talking about "I, Libertine," Shepherd may muse about how difficult it would be to explain Coney Island to an anthropologist from Venus (it would be even more difficult to explain Shepherd), about the vital role played by the Flexible Flyer in America's cultural renaissance, or about supersonic commercials which are inaudible but which suddenly drive you out to buy Copenhagen schnapps in the middle of the night.

"This is WOR. We have records," he says from time to time, but you're not likely to hear much music. Fragments of jazz—very good jazz, too—suddenly pop in without introduction or explanation, but they are soon succeeded by Shepherd, whose gift for uninterrupted monologue is one of the wonders of the world.

What he talks about would drive a psychiatrist to another psychiatrist. He'll tell you about having "the monkey on his back" for papaya juice, about how, when "the tiger which lurks just below the surface in all of us," got to raging in him, he would quiet himself by invading chile parlors in Chicago and downing three quick bowls of chile.

"One of the most effective balms for the soul is to spend six months out of work right here in Manhattan," he says with an authority which suggests that he's done just that. The way things are going he may have to do it again. Shepherd has built up a tremendously devoted band of followers for his nocturnal, dream-like outpourings, but the station insists he isn't commercial—which is to say, night people don't buy things.

WOR is seeking a fifteen-minute across-the-board spot for him in the daytime, but hasn't managed to come up with one yet. Even if it could, such a program is very much a "day people" sort of thing, and it is hard to tell whether he'd flourish there as he does at night. Or whether he could even get started in fifteen minutes.