

SMOTHERS SHOW CENSORED ANEW

By GEORGE GENT

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Portions of Sunday's Hour
Blipped for 'Bad Taste'

By GEORGE GENT

Portions of this Sunday's "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour" have been eliminated by network censors as being in bad or questionable taste.

Earlier this week, Tom Smothers said the situation between the two brothers and the censors had improved in the last few weeks, "but we still have two or three disagreements every week over questions of taste." He added, however, that a new agreement allowed the comedy team greater freedom in treating controversial social issues in a satiric fashion.

On Wednesday, Mr. Smothers said that several sketches on tomorrow night's program had come under official scrutiny and a discussion of their merits was under way. The decision to blip and cut segments of the program before yesterday's taping was a result of those discussions.

Mr. Smothers said in Hollywood yesterday that the decision to eliminate portions of this Sunday's program, which will have Nanette Fabray and Robert Morse as guest stars, was made by Perry Lafferty, vice president of programming on the West Coast for the Columbia Broadcasting System.

Blip-Crossed Lovers

In one such sketch, about Romeo and Juliet, Miss Fabray was supposed to ask Romeo, played by Tom Smothers, "Did you get that girl in trouble?" The comedian said Mr. Lafferty was convinced that the line could only be interpreted as "Did you get that girl pregnant?" It was eliminated as being in "extremely questionable taste" and a blip will signal its omission.

In another sketch, a line referring to a store with men's

shoes in the window as a "gentleman's recreation parlor" has been cut. So, too, has a line in which a hippie invites Tom to "share a little tea" with her and then explains "I'm drinking it today." The viewer will hear only the word "today."

Tom and Dick Smothers have been engaged in a longstanding feud with the network over censorship of their material. The problem goes back at least to last April, when a sketch by Elaine May satirizing movie censors was killed for reasons of bad taste. In September, the sixth stanza of Pete Seeger's "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy" was excised after the folk singer had taped the performance.

Industry observers point out that the Smothers Brothers highly publicized battles with the network over censorship might not be entirely unrelated to their ratings battle with the National Broadcasting Com-

pany's long-running "Bonanza."

There is also some evidence for believing that not everyone in high places at the network is unhappy about the publicity being given the show over the censorship issue.