

WWDJ Drops Its Rock Format In Shift to Religious Programming

Bergen County's only commercial radio station, WWDJ, is switching its format today from rock 'n' roll to nearly all religious programming.

The AM station, at 97 on the dial, also is moving its operations in Hackensack from Hackensack Avenue to two trailers at the site of its transmitter, at the foot of Commerce Way.

Explaining the format switch, Sean Casey, program director, said, "We feel there are an awful lot of rockers in the New York Metropolitan area now so it was difficult to compete. There are only three or four religion stations, only one of them full time."

Mr. Casey denied reports that the station was losing \$60,000 to \$80,000 a month, but said he could not discuss the financial aspect of the move because "all the figures are in Atlanta," headquarters of the station's owner, Pacific and Southern Broadcasting Company.

Mr. Casey added that WWDJ had had financial difficulties "at times" and that "we do have tremendous overhead."

The new format will feature nationally syndicated programs such as "Song Time" with John DeBrine as well as such local programs as the Sunday morning sermons from the First Baptist Church of Hackensack.

Producers of these programs will pay to have them broadcast. Mr. Casey said that there was room in the format for

commercials, but none were scheduled at present. He said various kinds of religious programs would constitute about 20 per cent of the format at first, with the rest filled by religious music.

The station's news and public-affairs programs will continue as before, he said, adding that the only members of the approximately 25-member staff to be let go would be four full-time and two part-time disk jockeys.

WWDJ, whose call letters had been WJRZ, was sold to Pacific and Southern in 1971 by Lazar Emanuel, who stayed on as a consultant and then was called back as general manager. Before the sale, the station had featured country and Western music.

Mr. Casey said the 5,000-watt station, which can reach up to 16-million people, had been doing well in ratings but could be even more successful with religion. He said more than 400 stations throughout the country now were thriving with such a format. And, he said, the only other full-time religion station in this area is WFME, an FM station.

The program director said the former site of the station probably would be sold. The new quarters, "a couple of trailers in a cinderblock wall," have been remodelled to house administrative as well as broadcast facilities, but Mr. Casey conceded, "it's going to be a little cramped."