

SMOOTH GOING FOR TV AT UA MEET

- Only question raised at stockholders meeting is AAP deal
- Tv movies bring \$4.7 million of \$70.4 million 1957 gross

There was a total absence of heated debate between shareholders and management of United Artists Corp. on the company's position in television at last week's annual stockholder meeting in New York. Where at other recent stockholder meetings of motion picture firms—20th Century-Fox, Paramount—management has had to answer for its actions in selling backlog films to tv, there seemed to be no such call at UA. However, there were some questions about UA's purchase of 700,000 shares of Associated Artists Productions Inc. (\$6 cash plus \$6 in debentures in United Artists Assoc., UA subsidiary) for a total value of \$8.4 million—a purchase being contested in the courts by National Telefilm Assoc.

UA's position as the only major Hollywood power actively engaged in tv sale of post-1948 film product apparently has paid off in terms of earnings, UA board chairman Robert S. Benjamin reported. Out of a total 1957 world-wide gross of \$70.4 million, film rentals on two major tv packages totaling 91 features came to \$4.7 million. Net income for the first quarter of 1958 was up 11.7%, tv film rentals in U. S. and Canada accounting for \$700,000. (UA this past spring released an additional grouping of seven films, the "UA-65" packet, announced at the NAB convention, but this does not show up in the first quarter report).

Regarding the UA-AAP-NTA situation, Mr. Benjamin declined to discuss "all the legal ramifications" of the case, noting that UA attorneys had appealed the NTA petition of last month and were pressing for "quick trial" [FILM, June 9].

Nor would President Arthur B. Krim disclose UA's plans to gain additional public financing (to pay in part for the AAP deal) through floating a new stock issue. He said, "We have only discussed it so far and have not yet drafted a final plan." Mr. Benjamin indicated the firm would file a plan with SEC within the month." Underwriting agents will be F. Eberstadt & Co., New York.

Two proposals by management were overwhelmingly approved by the shareholders who—either directly or by proxy—constituted a quorum with 83.2% of outstanding shares present. The first called for re-election of the present slate of directors; the second asked for adoption of a restricted stock option plan whereby UA executives could purchase a greater interest in the firm.

Mr. Krim, noting that "our investments in tv are modest at this time, but our hopes substantial," offered rebuttal to his counter-

parts at other major film companies. In "a comment on the general nature of the motion picture business," Mr. Krim said that Hollywood today is making bigger films in terms of gross sales ("films grossing \$10 million are becoming more commonplace . . .") and is enjoying patronage of greater and more selective audiences for these "blockbusters."

Mr. Benjamin admitted that B and C films were not faring too well and also indicated that "if a film is a failure today it's a much greater and costlier failure than it would have been a few years ago." But, he indicated, the UA "experiment" has "left no doubt" that films and tv can live freely with one another without threat of mutual extinction.

LISTENERS AND LOOKERS

UA, like most film companies, usually limits its "preview list" to a selected group of newsmen and critics. But last week, UA used two of New York's woman radio commentators to attract as many housewives as possible to a screening of the new Frank Sinatra-Tony Curtis film, "Kings Go Forth," slated for release next month. UA suggested to Martha Deane (Marian Young Taylor) of WOR and WWRL's Alma John that they ask their listeners to write to the station if they wished to attend the showing, slated next Thursday at Loew's neighborhood theatres. The film deals with miscegenation and should have Negro audience appeal, UA said in explaining the role of WWRL, which caters to New York's extensive Negro market.



MR. BENJAMIN

WGN-TV to Offer 'Ding Dong' On Tape Starting in August

Stations equipped with Ampex videotape machines will be offered Dr. Frances Horwich's *Ding Dong School* series by WGN-TV Chicago for local across-the-board programming late in August, it is being announced today (Monday) by Ward L. Quaal, vice president and general manager of WGN-AM-TV.

The announcement confirms earlier reports that this and other WGN-TV children's series may be slated for distribution to interested independent stations as part of the *Chicago Tribune* station's syndication or regional network project [STATIONS, March 24].

Mr. Quaal claimed that the action on *Ding Dong School* also "represents the first time a Monday through Friday strip pro-

gram has ever been made available on tape to television stations."

Twenty-three stations, not counting "key network outlets," are equipped with Ampex machines to handle black-and-white programs on magnetic tape, it was stated. Master tapes will be completed by the WGN-TV engineering department in time for initial showing starting Aug. 25. WGN Inc. described the plan as a move to "pioneer marketing with Ampex." The series is being made available in response to inquiries from stations throughout the country, according to Mr. Quaal.

Expansion Program In Offing at CNP

California National Productions last week was reported to be on the verge of announcing a new expansion program that includes plans to increase its production facilities by bringing additional outside packagers under its syndication aegis.

Though CNP, a wholly-owned film subsidiary of NBC, was keeping its planning board covered, reports in Hollywood and in New York pointed to a lifting of production sights.

Unconfirmed, but expected, is the appointment of Frank Cleaver, NBC-TV director of film programs on the West Coast, to head CNP's production. Robert A. Cinader, CNP vice president, has resigned as production chief to join Hal Roach Studios as a vice president. Fred Hamilton, manager of film programs at the network, is to succeed Mr. Cleaver at NBC-TV.

Also lending insight in future activity was an apparent CNP agreement with George Cohan, a production executive formerly reporting to Mr. Cinader, for independent tv film production in association with California.

CNP now operates NBC Television Films and Victory Program Sales as two separate sales units. Both are engaged in tv film syndication, VPS concentrating on older properties including off-network reruns.

Biggest sales getter for CNP is *Silent Service* (now in second year and second 39 episodes now in production) followed by *Boots & Saddles—The Story of the Fifth Cavalry*, and *Union Pacific* (latest CNP-produced film series offered for syndication). First new step in outside packaging or production was the new tv film series, *Danger Is My Business*, for which CNP has assumed distribution [FILM, June 9].

Three New Series Syndicated To Stations by Telestar Films

Telestar Films, New York, announced last week it is releasing three new half-hour tv film series for syndication to stations. They are *Counterspy*, an adventure-suspense series filmed on location throughout the world; *Parole*, a documentary serial based on actual case records in California and an untitled program featuring country-music personalities.

David H. Savage, executive vice president, reported that 26 programs in the *Parole* series already have been produced by Flagg