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PROGRAMMING

20TH CENTURY-FOX IS 'BUYING'

Major movie studio is going ahead quickly to buy stations, expand its tv business

20th Century-Fox Film Corp. is in a "damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead" mood in television. It wants to acquire tv stations, and means to purchase them as soon as possible. The company also has a "grand design" on other phases of the tv business.

These "hopes" of 20th are for sure. But so far, 20th is uncertain as to a timetable. Much of its springboarding into various phases of tv will depend on the "appropriate time."

Based on an interview last week with Peter G. Levathes, former Young & Rubicam director of radio-tv and the newly appointed president of 20th's tv subsidiary (20th Century-Fox Television Productions Inc.), the following summary represents the management thinking on tv. Mr. Levathes, at the time of the interview (Oct. 14) had been "on the job" but two days.

- Station ownership — Negotiations are underway with several tv stations and 20th Century-Fox will discuss a deal with any station. As yet the company has not entered into a new purchase agreement. (It is known that 20th Century-Fox is negotiating with the Gannett Newspapers for the purchase of Ch. 13 KOVR (TV) Stockton, Calif. [CLOSED CIRCUIT, Oct. 5]) and apparently also has expressed interest in KMBC-TV Kansas City. The motion picture firm has an application pending for FCC approval of its \$4.1 million buy of Ch. 9 KMSP-TV Minneapolis.

- Film production for tv—Mr. Levathes was to leave New York over the past weekend for an extended stay in California to look over the production set up. The company has *The Many Loves of Dobie Gillis* on CBS-TV (Tuesday, 8:30-9 p.m.), *Five Fingers* on NBC-TV (Saturday, 9:30-10:30 p.m.) and *Adventures in Paradise* on ABC-TV (Monday, 9:30-10:30 p.m.).

Another series, *Last Frontier*, is being made with CBS-TV. The series will be made up of hour-long episodes with Alaska the setting.

20th plans to continue to make both half hour and hour-long shows, the latter being developed for network sale. It also will use its literary properties. The company's aim: "top quality" film.

- Syndication — 20th Century-Fox hopes to enter the syndication field at the "proper time." It has not yet de-

veloped an organization for this purpose.

- Commercials — The company expects to enter this phase of tv but not before the tv film production plans are formulated. The firm has found many approaches to commercial production (for advertisers and agencies). This aspect appears to be far down the list.

Those features released from 20th Century-Fox's pre-1949 library thus far have been distributed by National Telefilm Assoc.

Etv: help to kiddies?

The National Education Television & Radio Center this month begins testing a children's program it has spent 10 months developing. Three versions of a half-hour series, *What's New*, begin five-week runs on KCTS (TV) Seattle, KRMA-TV Denver, KUED (TV) Salt Lake City, WTHS-TV Miami, WYES-TV New Orleans and WMVS-TV Milwaukee.

Among questions the test, lasting five weeks, will try to answer, is whether educational tv can supply all of a child's program needs. To this end, test shows are loaded with varying "payloads" of entertainment and general educational values for the 7-12 year-olds. Results will be evaluated by the NET with the help of schools.

The test will guide selections for a *What's New* series next year.

BMI selling BMI

Broadcast Music Inc. last week was in the process of disposing of its popular-music publishing arm, also known as BMI. Negotiations were in progress with Columbia Pictures, through its Screen Gems subsidiary, for sale of all rights—except performing rights—in a group of several hundred tunes published by BMI. Columbia would acquire both recording and publishing rights in this music, but the performing rights—which BMI licenses to broadcasters and others—would be retained by BMI. Nor would the deal affect Associated Music Publishers, BMI subsidiary which publishes serious music and acts as agent for concert music of certain European publishers.