

# Metromedia acquires Wolper Productions

Stock and cash bring total deal to \$3.6 million  
as radio-TV group owner buys program firm

Metromedia Inc., one of the nation's major owners of radio and TV stations, last week entered the field of program production and distribution by acquiring the entire stock of Wolper Productions Inc., major independent producer of documentary programs for television.

The transaction involves an exchange of 69,551 shares of Metromedia common stock and approximately \$1 million in cash for the Wolper stock, for a total purchase price of over \$3.6 million (based on the Thursday quotation of \$40 a share for the Metromedia stock). David L. Wolper, president of Wolper Productions, owned 75% of the stock, with four key employees holding the remaining 25%.

The acquisition was announced Thursday (Oct. 22) at a news conference in Hollywood, conducted by Mr. Wolper and Richard Geismar, vice president of Metromedia, representing John W. Kluge, board chairman and president. Under the agreement, which is expected to be closed before the end of the year, Metromedia becomes full owner of the Wolper production organization plus five subsidiaries: Wolper Television Sales, a television syndication operation handling all nonnetwork sales of programs in the U. S., Major Newsreel Inc. (formerly Paramount News) and three Wolper music companies. Mr. Wolper remains as president of Wolper Productions and head of its operations, and also will become a vice president of Metromedia.

Metromedia's other divisions include: Metropolitan Broadcasting Television (owner of TV stations WNEW-TV New York; WTTG Washington; KTTV Los Angeles; KMBC-TV Kansas City, Mo., WTVH Peoria, Ill., and WTVP Decatur, Ill.); Metropolitan Broadcasting Radio (WNEW-AM-FM New York, WIP-AM-FM Philadelphia, KLAS-AM-FM Los Angeles, WHK-AM-FM Cleveland and KMBC-AM-FM Kansas City, Mo.); Metro TV Sales and Metro Radio Sales, station representative organizations; Foster & Kleiser, outdoor advertising firm; Metro Transit Advertising; and The Ice Capades.

Cash to Expand ■ Metromedia gains

a major program source in acquiring the Wolper organization, Mr. Geismar observed, adding that this is very important for any independent television broadcasting company. Mr. Wolper said that the transaction gives him immediate capital for expansion that otherwise "I might have to wait three to five years for." A statement from Mr. Kluge, released in Hollywood, stated: "This is a logical step in Metromedia's corporate development, combining two young and aggressive broadcasting and entertainment entities. It will make possible better entertainment and informational programs for the public and simultaneously achieve a growth objective for the company."

Mr. Wolper started in the TV documentary production field some four years ago with a capital of \$2,500, a small office, himself, Jack Haley Jr. (his top production executive next to himself) and a secretary. His first production, *The Race for Space*, was rejected by the TV networks, whose general policy is to broadcast no documentaries except those they make themselves. With the help of an advertiser who liked the program and wanted to put it on, he got it broadcast on a special network of over 100 stations. Since then, most Wolper programs have been broadcast outside the networks, with such notable exceptions as *The Making of the President 1960* which was broadcast on ABC-TV (winning four Emmys) and *Hollywood and the Stars*, which NBC-TV broadcast after ruling that its subject matter was not hard news and therefore it did not violate the NBC rule against non-NBC documentaries.

Wolper Productions is currently producing six TV specials for The Xerox Co., six more for the 3M Co., with 15 more specials and five TV series in the planning stage. Additionally, arrangements have been made with United Artists Corp. for Wolper to produce four documentaries, of about two hours each, and four entertainment feature pictures for theatrical release through UA. The first theatrical documentary,

"Four Days in November," is now being shown. The second, "Adolph Hitler and the Third Reich," has been in production for about a year and should be completed in another year, Mr. Wolper said.

There are definite plans for getting into daytime television, Mr. Wolper stated, with a program about Hollywood probably the first to be developed, and a number of panel programs. These will be taped, according to present plans, possibly at KTTV, although he admitted he had yet to inspect their facilities. One of his first personal projects, he said, will be to visit all Metromedia stations to see what he can do for them and how they can fit into his production plans.

## Program development group to have seminar

A six-man exploration committee of Program Development Associates, the new group of independent TV station executives studying future program sources, is to meet in Chicago today (Oct. 26) preceding a two-day program seminar of participating stations starting the next day at WGN-TV Chicago.

The group is expected to organize on a more formal basis in early December. The first informal meeting was held Sept. 10 at the invitation of Ward L. Quaal, executive vice president and general manager of WGN Inc.

The committee, to meet at the Hotel Continental, is headed by Willard Michaels, vice president, television division, Storer Broadcasting Co. Those serving with him to find out what cooperative efforts can be implemented to stimulate production of new quality products in all categories of programs include Thomas A. Bland, vice president, TV programs, Crosley Broadcasting; Dalton Dannon, director, film programming, KTLA-TV Los Angeles; Thomas B. Jones, executive program manager, Triangle Broadcasting; Richard Krolik, program manager, Time-Life Broadcast, and Richard Shively, executive vice president, Polaris Broadcasting.

The Tuesday-Wednesday seminar of program managers and program development chiefs will deal largely with an exhibition of both film and videotape shows to determine if there is a desire by stations in the group to purchase one another's product.

The committee headed by Mr. Michaels is scheduled to report to a full management meeting of the participating stations in New York on Dec. 2 at the Time-Life Building. Formal organization is expected then.