

WFIL is sold for \$11.5 million

Philadelphia AM joins the LIN broadcast group as Capcities concludes its station spin-offs

Agreement for the sale of WFIL(AM) Philadelphia to LIN Broadcasting Corp. for \$11.5 million was announced last week by Thomas S. Murphy, president of Capital Cities Broadcasting Corp., and Donald A. Pels, president of LIN.

The sale was the last of eight projected station spin-offs by Capital Cities as the result of its \$110-million acquisition of Triangle Publications' properties and brought the spin-off sales total to \$51,455,000. Of that amount \$37 million will be derived from the sale of two of Capcities' own stations. Like all the other sales, the WFIL transaction is subject to FCC approval.

The \$11.5-million purchase price was \$1 million short of the figure reached in an earlier, tentative agreement under which WFIL would have been acquired by a new company in which Philadelphia Life Insurance Co. would own 80% and a group of local residents 20%. That agreement was called off when no more than half of the 20% local block of stock was subscribed, reportedly because of weakness in the stock market and uncertainty about the economy (BROADCASTING, June 29).

Last week's announcement said financing of LIN's purchase price had been "arranged with the seller and a group of New York City banks."

Acquisition of WFIL will give LIN its seventh AM station, the maximum allowance by the FCC. LIN owns KILT-AM-FM Houston, WIL-AM-FM St. Louis, WBBF(AM) and WBBF(FM) Rochester, N.Y., WAKY(AM) Louisville, Ky., KEEL-AM-FM Shreveport, La., KAAV(AM) Little Rock, Ark., WAVY-TV Norfolk-Portsmouth-Newport News, Va., and WAND-TV Decatur, Ill. The company, whose stock is traded over the counter, also operates Starday-King Records and LIN Communications, said to be the largest telephone-answering operation in Manhattan.

Capital Cities' \$110-million deal with Triangle was for WFIL-AM-FM-TV Philadelphia, WNHC-AM-FM-TV New Haven, Conn., KFRE-AM-FM-TV Fresno, Calif., Triangle's syndication division and certain Philadelphia real estate (BROADCASTING, Feb. 23, et seq.).

Separately Triangle has proposed to sell the rest of its stations—WFBG-AM-FM-TV Altoona, Pa.; WLYH-TV Lancaster-Lebanon, Pa., and WBNF-AM-FM-TV Binghamton, N.Y.—to George A. Koehler, general manager of Triangle's radio and TV division, for \$16 million, contingent on FCC approval of the

other sales. Mr. Koehler plans to offer the AM and FM stations for sale to groups interested in local radio (BROADCASTING, May 11), but has not yet announced buyers for the outlets.

Capcities' projected spin-offs involve six stations being acquired from Triangle and two stations already owned by Capcities.

Capcities' WSAZ-TV Huntington, W. Va., would go to group-owner Lee Enterprises for \$18 million, and its WTEN-TV Albany, N.Y., to Poole Broadcasting for \$19 million. Poole owns WJRT-TV Flint, Mich., and WPRI-TV Providence, R.I.

Of the Triangle group, WNHC(AM) would go to the owners of WERI-AM-FM Westerly, R.I., for \$850,000; WNHC-FM to station manager Robert Herpe for \$125,000; KFRE(AM) to Walter Lake of McGavern-Guild-PGW for \$875,000; KFRE-FM to Richard A. Ingraham and Richard A. Wagner, Californians with broadcast experience, and Mr. Wagner's father, Richard W., for \$105,000; WFIL-FM to Richer Communications, a group headed by station manager John L. Richer, for \$1 million, and now WFIL(AM) to LIN for \$11.5 million.

WFIL, established in 1922, is on 560 khz with 5 kw.

Networks, V's balk at aid for UHF's

Protest FCC proposal to assure U's network programing

A number of comments on the FCC's combined notice of inquiry and notice of rulemaking concerning the desirability of rules that would assure UHF stations a certain amount of network programing were filed with the commission last week just before the Sept. 15 deadline.

And, predictably, the networks and VHF stations squared off against the UHF operators.

Two months ago the commission asked for comments on a number of questions involved in the matter (BROADCASTING, July 27). The proceeding results from a petition for rule-making filed in November 1969 by Triangle Telecasters Inc. (WRDU-TV [ch. 29] Durham, N.C.) requesting a rule that would bar stations in markets

of three or more outlets from having primary affiliations or right-of-first-refusal agreements with more than one network.

Triangle said WRDU-TV's VHF competition had primary affiliations with two of the networks—WTVD(TV) Durham, with CBS, and WRAL-TV Raleigh, with ABC—and maintained WRDU-TV should have a similar arrangement with NBC, which does not have a primary affiliation in the market.

WRDU-TV has agreements with CBS and NBC, but they are subject to prior rights of WTVD. The situation amounts to unfair competition, Triangle had asserted.

In its comments last week, ABC said WRDU-TV's problem does not exist in many markets. "In all but a few (none in the case of ABC) of two-VHF intermixed markets the UHF has a primary affiliation," ABC stated, and added that "it can reasonably be assumed that when UHF conversion and UHF station acceptance reach a certain point, every network will prefer to have a primary affiliate in the larger markets."

ABC had two suggestions: that prohibiting a station from carrying more than a certain amount of network programing from a second network is more likely to be effective, and that in forcing networks to affiliate with U's an exception should be made when the U's facilities are not comparable to those of the V.

CBS also saw "no real problem" and suggested that if there are instances of difficulty with UHF affiliations they should be handled on a case-by-case basis. The forces of competition are more likely to produce a better solution, it stated.

NBC said the need for a rule to aid UHF gain affiliations is "insubstantial and obscure." It said the proposed remedies are "designed to aid a very few private parties. Furthermore, it said, adoption will tangle the FCC in the complexities of network-station affiliations, including clearance of programs, contract terms and advertiser preferences.

It also pointed out that NBC has adopted a policy similar to that of CBS and ABC of withdrawing only after 13 weeks those series programs placed on a "per-program" affiliate and that its policy of giving 28 days' notice will continue to apply.

Capital Cities Broadcasting, owner of WTVD, said it had nothing further to add to its initial response to the petition that triggered the proceeding, but emphasized that the public interest would best be served by continuing to rely on competition to persuade U's to improve facilities and performance.

The gist of comments by XYZ Tele-