



Shop talk. Confering at the National Cable Television Association board meeting in Washington last week were four members who handle special issues. Above are (l to r): Rex Bradley, Telecable, Norfolk, Va.; William Brazeal, Community Telecommunications, Denver; David H. Foster, president of the organization, and Alfred R. Stern, Television Communications Inc., New York.

all Air Force bases in the country. This establishes a formal mechanism for dealing with commanders of all Air Force bases and deals with service, rates, maintenance, etc.

The NCTA board then authorized Mr. Bradley and his committee to seek similar arrangements with the other military services that have posts in the U.S.

Among other items discussed at the meeting were municipal ownership of cable systems (directors thought NCTA should invigorate its opposition to this concept), and multiple ownership of cable and TV stations in the same markets (no consensus).

Opposition appears to microwave pay-cable service

Theater owners and three TV's ask FCC to turn down proposal for CATV link-up, on basis of unfair competitive advantage

The FCC last week was asked to deny applications by Western Tele-Communications Inc. to establish an elaborate microwave-relay system in the western half of country for delivering to cable systems the subscription-program service of Home Theatre Network, Los Angeles (BROADCASTING, Dec. 4).

The pleadings last week, which came from the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO) and the licensees of KGUN-TV Tucson, Ariz., and KOAA-TV Pueblo, Colo. (which filed jointly), and KRDO-TV Colorado Springs, all claimed that the proposed service would pose a severe competitive threat to existing program sources in the areas to be affected.

The WT-C/HTN proposal is being heralded as the first link in a projected nationwide microwave system carrying pay-TV programming to cable systems around the country. The immediate proposal calls for the establishment of a

Los Angeles-to-Denver microwave network, with 40 relay points serving five states.

But according to NATO, the proposal epitomizes "the type of far-reaching policy questions" in the area of pay-cable transmissions which it, among others, have urged the commission to deal with on a consolidated basis. NATO has previously asked the commission to impose a "freeze" on granting spectrum space to entities seeking to establish payable service and has actively sought to block a pay-cable proposal in New York by Sterling Communications Inc. In its pleading last week, it claimed that the immediate proposal could have "a severe and adverse economic impact" on theater owners in the areas to be served. It asked the commission to either deny the proposal outright or to withhold action on it pending consideration of the general problems related to pay cablecasting, such as competitive questions, antisiphoning issues and program exclusivity.

KRDO-TV, in its pleading, expressed concern over the impact the WT-C/HTN proposal could have on its own viability in light of the fact that the proposed service would be carried on a Cablecom-General CATV system in its service area. Noting that system is permitted by the FCC to import several distant TV signals from Denver, KRDO-TV asserted that Cablecom-General is already "overserved" and that an expansion of that service should not be permitted.

KGUN-TV and KOAA-TV echoed the sentiments of both NATO and KRDO-TV in claiming that the proposed microwave system would pose an unfair competitive threat and that the commission "is not now in a position" to deal with the policy questions involved without a hearing.

Sterling expands

Home Box Office Inc., New York, is being formed as a subsidiary of Sterling Communications to provide pay-cable

TV systems with live and film programming. Sterling has the rights to Madison Square Garden events in several areas of the country. Charles F. Dolan, president of Sterling Communications, is scheduled to take on additional duties as president of Home Box Office and his first executive appointment brings John Barrington into HBO from Teleprompter as vice president, public relations. Succeeding Mr. Barrington at Teleprompter is Donald F. Whitheridge, who has been named director of public relations. Mr. Whitheridge has been director of corporate relations for American Television and Communications Corp. and earlier was public relations director of the National Cable Television Association.

Cox-American deal with minorities draws fire at FCC

Bureau chief asks commissioners to declare agreement illegal, while approving merger of firms; minority counsel says he'll fight

The satisfaction that minority groups in California expressed over an unprecedented agreement they reached with Cox Cable Communications Inc. and American Television & Communications Corp. may have been premature.

The agreement was designed to help clear the way for the merger of the two companies into the second-largest cable-television company in the country—Cox American Communications Inc. The groups said they would not oppose it (BROADCASTING, Dec. 4). And the FCC this week is expected to approve the various applications and waiver requests that will permit the companies to carry out their merger plans.

But the FCC's Cable Television Bureau chief, Sol Schildhouse, last week urged the commission to declare the agreement with the coalition minorities "null and void"—at least that portion of it committing Cox-American systems in California to make up to three channels available to the minority groups at an annual fee of \$1 per channel. Other provisions commit the company to make video equipment available to the groups, to help establish a statewide production and training center for minority groups and to meet minority-employment goals.

The commission is expected to take up the matter again this week, along with the merger proposal, possibly with Commissioner Benjamin L. Hooks opposing efforts to scuttle the agreement, or any part of it.

Mr. Schildhouse contends that the channel-leasing provision is inconsistent with the commission's new cable rules in that it "discriminates" against other groups and individuals that would seek to lease channels ("Closed Circuit," Dec. 11). He says the rules require systems to lease channels on a first-come, first-served, nondiscriminatory basis.

"If other groups sought to lease chan-