

of 28 states. The new Ohio franchise, in the city of Delaware, is adjacent to a franchise ATC previously had been awarded in Columbus, which is now under construction (one of four different franchises awarded for Columbus).

The North Carolina acquisition, for an undisclosed amount of cash, gives ATC control of Cable Television Co., Charlotte, a system serving 5,400 subscribers, in operation since 1967. ATC already owns Cablevision of Charlotte, which serves 7,100 subscribers.

Public access sought on S.F. cable system

A call for a moratorium on further expansion of cable TV in San Francisco was sounded by a city supervisor there—all for the purpose of studying the question of public access.

The proposal was made by Robert Gonzalez, a member of the city's 11-man board of supervisors, in a speech to the local chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Mr. Gonzalez claims support in the Latin population in the Bay Area. Mr. Gonzalez charged the public has been denied access on the only CATV operating in the city: TV Signal Corp., owned by Viacom International Inc. Neither TV Signal nor Viacom officials would comment.

Mr. Gonzalez also proposed that the seven-year-old franchise held by Western Communications Inc. (*San Francisco Chronicle-KRON-TV*) be revoked because the system never has been built. Western officials said they are studying the matter which, they noted, is complicated by the FCC ruling barring crossownership of co-located television stations and cable systems.

Cable Briefs

Pause for clarity. FCC will not issue annual reporting forms for cable television systems until sometime next month. Delay in mailing follows decision to revise existing cable reporting forms, including annual report, financial report and computation form for annual fee, to improve clarity in instructions. Commission said it will issue new filing deadlines at time when new forms are mailed to all known system operators.

Signs fifth. Home Theater Network, Los Angeles, announced signing of its fifth long-term agreement to provide pay programming services to CATV subscribers. Latest signing is with Continental CATV Inc., New York, which serves over 90,000 customers in 25 systems in Midwest and East. Previously, HTN had signed agreements with Cablecom-General, Sammons Communications, Liberty Communications and Communications Properties Inc. Total subscribers, including Continental, is nearly 750,000. HTN plans to test its system in Redondo Beach, Calif., this spring.

FM service on cable seeks young audience

Two youthful groups in California start stereo program operations with advertiser support in mind

In what is seen as perhaps the forerunner of a new youth-oriented merger of FM programming and cable TV, a group of students has established a studio at the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, Calif., and contracted with Valley County Cable Co. (which serves 8,400 subscribers in the Valencia-Newhall-Saugus area) to provide 24 hours daily of stereo FM on 105.4 mhz beginning March 1.

Arrangements with the CATV system are loose. The students are paying \$60 monthly for the four-mile telephone link from the studio to the cable headend at Newhall. They hope to recoup this outlay, and perhaps make added revenue by selling commercials at \$10 per spot for a minimum of 14 spots.

Ron Horwitz, manager of the enterprise, CCIA Cable Radio, said last week that the Valencia group is planning to interconnect its programs, via a microwave link, with a similar group in Los Angeles. This is Progressive Cablecasters which, for the last year, has been serving the 20,000 subscribers of Theta Cable Co.'s system in that city with free-form FM radio—rock, progressive jazz, even classical music—on 108 mhz.

Progressive Cablecasters is run by Brad Sobel, who began commercial operation in January and plans to share his revenues with Theta. Progressive is charging \$7 per spot for prime evening time. Mr. Sobel says several contracts are signed, but are being studied by lawyers. That rate, by the way, is expected to produce first-year revenues of \$60,000. After that he forecasts \$122,000 annually in sales.

Mr. Sobel has a short, but varied, history in broadcasting, including one bust. He was the operator of the unlicensed, 50-w WPOT-FM on 88.1 mhz that two years ago was closed down by FCC inspectors when it was traced to his Los Angeles apartment (*BROADCASTING*, Nov. 15, 1971).

Mr. Sobel said last week that he feels cable FM offers young people a new access to programming relevant to their needs. "Two years ago," he commented, "their needs were pretty radical. Now they're more normal. And that's what we intend to give them."

New films for pay cable

A weekly double-feature movie program for its pay-cable test in San Diego has been announced by Optical Systems Corp., Los Angeles. The films, to be offered each week during the first 13-week cycle beginning March 3, come from major producers—MGM, 20th Century-Fox, Universal and Warner Bros. All will have completed theatrical first runs in San Diego, it was emphasized, and none have been shown on conventional TV. Num-

bered among the films are "Travels With My Aunt," "The French Connection," "Dirty Harry," "Summer of '42," and "Escape From The Planet of The Apes."

Geoffrey M. Nathanson, president of Optical Systems, noted that most of the films are GP rated, but some R movies are included. The latter, he explained, will be run after 9 p.m. "We do not plan to exhibit X-rated films," he added.

The pay-cable operation is on a channel leased from the 70,000-subscriber CATV system owned by Cox Cable Communications Corp.

Time commits more to pay-cable future

Time Inc. signaled its interest in pay-cable TV last week when it said it will make an initial investment of about \$3 million in Home Box Office Inc., New York, a cable-television programming company and subsidiary of Sterling Communications Inc., New York.

Time, which now has the majority interest in Sterling Communications, said that further financing of about \$6 million will be arranged for Home Box Office in coming months, either directly or through Sterling. Time also said that directly and through Sterling it will own more than 75% of Home Box Office.

Home Box Office has been operational for three months as a programming supplier. It supplies current feature films and live sports events to cable TV systems, which charge a fee above the regular subscription cost for the special programming. The pay-cable TV system has been operative for three months in Wilkes-Barre and Allentown and began two weeks ago in Bethlehem, all in Pennsylvania (*BROADCASTING*, Feb. 12).

Md. considers franchising

A bill that would give the state power to license and regulate cable-TV franchises while taking such control away from local jurisdictions has been introduced into the Maryland legislature. Under the measure the Department of Licensing and Regulation would have power to screen cable-TV-franchise applicants and grant licenses for minimum of 10 and maximum of 20 years. Counties and municipalities, however, would still be authorized to tax cable-TV franchises operating in their jurisdictions.

ABA appoints new Merkle firm

Jay J. Merkle, who resigned last month as vice president in charge of group communications for Teleprompter Corp., New York, has formed Bedford Productions Ltd., also New York, as consultant in cable-TV programming. First client for new firm is the American Basketball Association, for whom Bedford will act as consultant for pay cable as well as non-pay cable coverage of league games. Bedford plans to specialize in production of sports, concert and special entertainment events for cable TV. *Bedford Productions Ltd., 39 West 55th Street, New York.*