

of either priests or pedants."

Mr. Foster also took a swipe at those consultants (namely the Cable Television Information Office which has published a study of the cable-television options for the city of Jacksonville, Fla., that suggests that the decision for or against municipal ownership be made "without regard to any emotional arguments") who generate subtle confusion that "lurks behind the bland mask of impartiality and professional detachment."

Conceding that he has strong personal feelings about government ownership of cable television, Mr. Foster cited three principal arguments that reflect his thinking:

■ That "the taxing authority, the credit, the bond rating of a community ought not to be committed either directly or indirectly to the development of a high risk, capital intensive industry." (Says Mr. Foster, "Let the entrepreneurs take the risk.")

■ That there isn't any municipal or county government in the country that can come up with "the creative innovations which will be necessary to cause cable to realize its promise and potential."

■ That it must be recognized "that communications is not strictly a commodity nor is it a service." Instead, Mr. Foster said it's most important to know that communications, including cable TV, "is a resource and a right for all of our citizens."

Mr. Foster asked his audience to avoid thinking that because commercial interests oppose municipal ownership such government control must be a good idea. "To suggest that a city can't receive the benefits cable provides from entrepreneurs is just plain silly and irresponsible rhetoric," he concluded.

Cable, pay TV make inroads on pro sports

Pro basketball league signs up with Home Box Office

Home Box Office Inc., New York, has signed an exclusive contract to July 1, 1977, for the North American cable and pay-television rights to the games of the American Basketball Association.

Under terms of the contract with the ABA, Home Box Office will pay a minimum of \$1.5 million for the rights to pre-season, regular-season and play-off contests. Home Box Office will have first negotiation rights for cable and pay-TV with individual teams in their home territories. Local-station and network-television agreements pre-empt the Home Box Office agreement.

The contract went into effect on March 9 with the telecast of the Kentucky Colonels-Virginia Squires games to more than 5,000 subscribers on CATV systems in Wilkes-Barre, Allentown and Bethlehem, all Pennsylvania. These subscribers pay a fee above the monthly charges to receive Home Box Office programming consisting of first-run feature films and live sports events.

Programing



KNEW(AM)'s Don Chamberlain

Touchiest topic on radio now: talk about sex

Originators see a social purpose; FCC will listen to selected tapes; women keep reporting intimacies

Therapy or exploitation? Public service or public nuisance? Serious discussion or leering small talk? Radio operators who program so-called "sex-talk shows"—radio's copied format of late—feel their backs against the wall following attacks by members of Congress, the FCC and a body of irate listeners, whose number is as yet unknown.

To the practitioners of the female-oriented two-way talk shows even the term "sex talk" has now become anathema. Many refuse to be interviewed by reporters, saying that sensationalized accounts of the format are what got them into trouble in the first place. They complain of shorthand terms such as "topless" and "X-rated radio," which they say are agitating government scrutiny, and they may be right. Senator John O. Pastore (D-R.I.) and FCC Chairman Dean Burch are talking about finding a test case. The FCC has scheduled a session on the subject this week (see page 119).

Ray Stanfield, manager of KGBS-AM-FM Los Angeles, is sensitive to the condition. "Articles that have mentioned KGBS as the originator of a concept that has been stolen and bastardized have been grossly unfair," says Mr. Stanfield. "We didn't pioneer dirty radio. These sex-talk shows have evolved from the Bill Ballance show, to be sure. But we do not have a sex-talk show on this station. We have a talented, clever interviewer on the air, talking to

callers about man-woman relationships. Sex is an occasional by-product. But when the subject turns sexual, it is never handled in bad taste."

There is no way to characterize what has been called "sex-talk radio" in a general way; each station's version is different. The common denominator among the 50 or 60 stations programing daily shows is that only women are allowed to talk on a pre-determined topic of the day on the air. Usually the callers are not pre-screened or pre-taped—those devices dampen spontaneity, programers say—and are asked to remain anonymous. They are asked their first names only, where they live and their ages.

The originators of female-only, two-way talk, and they prefer that label to "sex-talk," say that they did not go into this type of programing with the idea of talking about sex exclusively. Mr. Stanfield explained: "When we began thinking about revamping our format two years ago, we had only a limited audience, I will admit. But the bulk of our listeners were young adults, men primarily. I had experience with two-way talk before coming here [at KLAC(AM) Los Angeles and WRNG(AM) North Atlanta, Ga.], and I wanted to get into something along those lines. But talk radio has traditionally appealed to older audiences, and we wanted to marry talk radio to our youthful audience. So we thought: 'What appeals most to young women?' And the obvious answer, of course, was young men. We wanted to put on the air light, humorous conversations about the relationships between men and women."

Rose Hutton, working at KGBS to help get its female-oriented programing ready, thought up the name *Feminine Forum*. At that time, in late 1970, several disk jockeys at the station would take calls from female listeners, off the air, and then air the edited tapes the next day. Ron Martin, hired as program director for KGBS several weeks into the *Feminine Forum* experiment, believed the pre-taping and various voices sounded dull. He asked the all-night man, formerly a rock disk jockey on KFWB(AM) Los Angeles and at stations from Denver to Hawaii after his KFWB days, whether he would do a live, midday version of *Feminine Forum*. Bill Ballance said he'd give it a try. Thus is made broadcasting history.

KGBS's success during midday convinced Storer Broadcasting, owner of the station, to start versions at its five other AM's, WJW Cleveland, WDEE Detroit, WGBS Miami, WSPD Toledo and WHN New York. It didn't take long for others, seeing a sure-fire solution for sagging midday ratings, to pick up the idea. Metro-media's KNEW(AM) San Francisco premiered *California Girls*—named after a hit song by the Beach Boys—in August 1972. Fairchild's KLIF(AM) Dallas simply called its female two-way talk show *The Dave Ambrose Show* when it went on the air last September. KILT(AM) Houston started a similar show several weeks later. WWDC(AM) Washington turned its afternoon *Scott Burton Show* toward personal relationships in November when "listen-