

Wells, KIUL(AM) Garden City, Kan., and a former FCC commissioner; Abraham Kalish, executive director of Accuracy in Media Inc., Louisiana Governor Edwin Edwards; Representative Charles Whalen (R.-Ohio) and BROADCASTING Magazine Chairman and Editor Sol Taishoff.

## Makeshift coverage of courts criticized

Michigan judge says proper job requires full-time reporter

The chief justice of the Michigan Supreme Court told an AP-sponsored seminar on court-media relations that the media should assign reporters to the courts on a full-time basis.

Chief Justice Thomas M. Kavanagh, speaking at the seminar in East Lansing, Mich., pointed out that the media rarely assign full-time reporters to the courts. "Sports, yes; courts, no," he said.

"Would management be prepared," he asked, "to allot three minutes or five minutes to trial film if it meant a complete and balanced version, or would one and one-half minutes have to do, no matter what the effect?"

Judge Kavanagh said media managers expect reporters to sandwich court assignments in between other duties "and in 15 minutes find out all there is to know about a trial that has been in session all day or more."

He said the Michigan Supreme Court is studying a relaxation of its prohibition of TV cameras and tape recorders in courtrooms.

## Newsmen win this one

The U.S. Supreme Court has refused again to review a lower court's ruling in a newsman's privilege case. But this time, the lower court ruling was in the newsman's favor.

The effect of the high court's ruling is to let stand a decision of a U.S. federal judge that newsmen who claim a First Amendment privilege need not disclose confidential sources in civil cases.

The issue arose in connection with a law suit brought by a group of blacks accusing real estate operators of "block-busting." The plaintiffs were seeking the identity of an anonymous source in an article on the subject that appeared in the now-defunct *Saturday Evening Post* in 1962.

The author of the article is Alfred Balk, who now teaches at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and is editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review*. Mr. Balk said he was sympathetic with the blacks' cause but felt obliged to protect his source's confidentiality in the interest of defending First Amendment rights to confidential sources.

Federal Judge Dudley B. Bonsal of New York refused to require disclosure. He acted before the U.S. Supreme Court in June held that reporters do not have a constitutional right to refuse to testify before grand juries in criminal cases. But

the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, in New York, considered the matter after the high court ruling, and it upheld Judge Bonsal, asserting it found no reason "to override the precious rights of freedom of speech and the press."

The court noted that federal law on the subject is "ambiguous" and that absent a federal statute, the courts must rely on judicial precedent and well-informed judgment. It said it saw no justification for either a blanket rule covering all federal-question cases or for a partial rule of disclosure for all civil-rights cases.

## TVN takers so far: 14 independents, 15 network affiliates

News service starts today with 30-minute daily service going to line-up of prospects

Television News Inc. said last week that nearly 30 TV stations in the top-40 markets would be in its free-trial line-up today (May 14) when its new daily electronic news service commences operation ("Closed Circuit," May 7).

They are stations that accepted TVN's offer of two weeks of service at no charge, designed "to convince stations of the excellence of our product by letting them experience it for themselves without any commitment," according to TVN President John O. Gilbert. He said "the widespread response reflects the industry's desire for additional news information."

TVN plans to feed approximately 30 minutes of domestic and international news and sports film in color daily, Monday through Friday. The feeds are scheduled at 5 p.m. NYT. Domestic news will come from TVN's bureau in New York, Washington, Chicago and Los Angeles, overseas news from the London-based Visnews Ltd. TVN sees its service as a primary news source for independent TV stations and a secondary source for network affiliates.

Stations listed late last week as set to commence the trial included affiliates of all three networks and some 15 independents.

Affiliates: WBZ-TV Boston, WJAR-TV Providence, R.I., WGR-TV Buffalo, N.Y., and KSTP-TV Minneapolis-St. Paul, all with NBC; WEWS-TV Cleveland, WTVN-TV Columbus, Ohio, WVUE-TV New Orleans, WFAA-TV Dallas, WKRC-TV Cincinnati and KMBC-TV Kansas City, Mo., all with ABC; WTOP-TV Washington, WHAS-TV Louisville, Ky., WBTU-TV Charlotte, N.C., WCCO-TV Minneapolis-St. Paul and WBNS-TV Columbus, Ohio, all with CBS.

Independents: WNEW-TV and WPIX-TV New York; WTAF-TV Philadelphia; WTTG-TV Washington; WKBD-TV Detroit; WGN-TV and WFLD-TV Chicago; WCIX-TV Miami; WTCN-TV Minneapolis-St. Paul; KTTV-TV, KTLA-TV Los Angeles; KTVU-TV Oakland-San Francisco; KPHO-TV Phoenix and KWGN-TV Denver.

# Time alters its course in cable

Stage set for exit from MSO ranks by Sterling sale of Manhattan system; Warner to pay \$20 million cash

Time Inc., which chose to sell its broadcast stations a year ago out of preference for cable TV, last week began a retreat from CATV-systems ownership and operation as well ("Closed Circuit," May 7).

Sterling Communications Inc., 70% owned by Time, reached an agreement in principle to sell its Manhattan CATV system and other subsidiaries with franchises on Long Island to Warner Communications Inc. for \$20 million cash. And Time officials confirmed that they were interested in—and negotiating toward—exchanging their other CATV systems and franchises for "an equity position" in one or more other multiple-system operators.

Officials of Time-Life Cable Communications Inc., subsidiary formerly known as Time-Life Broadcast, said late last week they still had no deal regarding their other cable properties but that it appeared likely, assuming one were reached, that they would go essentially to one MSO, "not Warner." They refused to say who it might be. Time's other cable interests include holdings in nine operating systems and numerous franchises including one in Fresno, Calif., and one in High Point, N.C., that Time-Life authorities consider especially important. These operating systems currently serve about 65,000 subscribers, of which Time's interests represent about 35,000 according to a Time-Life spokesman.

Warner's Warner Cable Corp. subsidiary, which currently has 130 cable systems serving approximately 400,000 subscribers in 29 states, would acquire Sterling Manhattan Cable Television Inc., which has 55,000 primary subscribers and a potential of more than 350,000 in its franchise covering the southern half of New York's Manhattan borough, and Sterling Nassau, which directly or through subsidiaries holds franchises in Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island. These are essentially undeveloped except for a pilot system, but the Long Island franchise area also has a potential put at 350,000 subscribers.

Time officials gave no formal reason for their decision to move out of active ownership and operation, but it was widely attributed to high start-up and operating costs. Barry Zorthian, chairman of Sterling, president of Time-Life Cable and a vice president of Time Inc., said the Sterling board felt the proposed sale to Warner "serves the best interest of Sterling's stockholders, freeing Sterl-