

## Programing

### The hustle in syndication that prime-time ruling set off

**Appeals court decision staying FCC's cutback of program hours has given new impetus, and hope, to syndicators, but the ball still remains in Washington's court; absent some promise of long-term stability, game shows and animals will dominate field**

Those program syndicators left in the race to the wire in station sales competition have weathered a tempestuous winter, spring and summer on their way to the fall.

The bad news began last December, when it became clear that the FCC was about to modify—in a downward direction—the prime-time access bonanza that had created a bull market in syndication. Hope of good news came in February, when the syndicators and their chief clients—at a Los Angeles conference of the National Association of Television Program Executives—talked themselves into believing that the FCC would change its mind, and would stay its modification-mindedness for at least another year. Gloom descended again, in earnest, a week later when a unanimous (five-member) FCC said it wouldn't after all.

But there was still a chance, if a slender one. A number of syndication organizations, led by the National Association of Independent Television Producers and Distributors (NAITPD) went to federal appeals court in New York to seek a judicial stay of the FCC hand—and, moreover, petitioned for an early resolution so that program producers and station program buyers could know once and for all whether access time periods would remain wide open or be trimmed on the flanks.

Courts, however, operate on timetables of their own, and by the morning of June 18 only the most hardened syndication optimists would have bet the price of a *Cisco Kid* half hour in the 180th market that the court would set them free again.

By mid-afternoon that same day it was another story—and if not an entirely new ball game in prime-time access, at

least an extra inning. Unexpectedly (unconscionably, in the view of some, especially at the major TV networks and among the major production companies that are their principal suppliers), the court ruled the FCC off base, and decreed at least another full television season for full-fledged access.

That surprising court verdict had immediate and startling repercussions. The TV networks had to reduce their programming by three or four half-hour segments weekly. Stations had to scurry for additional shows to fill these vacant slots. And program syndicators of the prime-access period were the beneficiaries of an opportunity they felt they had lost. Since, buyers and sellers alike have been engaged in the business of catch-up ball.

Although many stations still have not completed all their buys, and in most instances have not fixed the time periods in which access shows will be run, the court's stay enabled many of the front-running series to garner additional markets. And it gave a needed and strong push to other properties that had been faring only moderately well in the marketplace before June 18. In the latter category were such series as Fox Television's *Masquerade Party*, Gottlieb/Taffner's *The World at War*, Independent Television Corp.'s *The Protectors*, Lorne

Greene's *Last of the Wild*, Fox TV's *Salty the Sea Lion* and Ted Bates' *Police Surgeon*.

By now, the contours of prime access are substantially filled in and there is enough detail to provide an accurate picture. What emerges is no surprise: The programs chosen to adorn the prime-access landscape for next season—the third year of the commission's rule—are, not surprisingly, those that have scored well in the marketplace in the other two. Leading the pack: animal shows and game shows.

Conversations with program directors at stations and with their station reps highlight this observation on their selections: They would like to use innovative, quality programing but it's the game, wildlife, adventure and personality programs that attract the audiences. (There is another reason, too, of course: They are cheap. "You don't have to pay residuals to an elephant," as one prominent agency executive put it.)

So stations veered in many instances to the tried-and-proved prime-access shows of previous seasons (*Let's Make a Deal*, *Lawrence Welk*, *Treasure Hunt*, *Hollywood Squares*, *Hee Haw!*, *Wild Kingdom*, *Survival*, *Wild, Wild World of Animals*). High on their lists are remakes of popular network series (*Candid*

**Access active.** These are 28 syndicated programs sold in 10 or more markets for access time periods for the 1974 fall season, along with (in parentheses) the number of markets sold in all time periods. Asterisks denote barter shows.

Program	Distributor	Markets
*Animal World	Les Wallwork Assoc.	33 (79)
*Bobby Goldsboro Show	Show Biz Inc.	18 (128)
*Hee Haw!	Yongestreet	40 (126)
Hollywood Squares	Rhodes	50 (135)
Jeopardy	Metromedia Producers	16 (32)
*Jimmy Dean Show	Jimmy Dean Productions	10 (119)
*Lawrence Welk Show	Don Fedderson	41 (225)
Let's Make a Deal	Worldvision	47 (163)
*Lorne Greene's Last of the Wild	Y & R/Heritage	33 (37)
Masquerade Party	Fox TV	22 (22)
Name That Tune	Sandy Frank	46 (76)
New Candid Camera	Firestone	43 (105)
*Other People, Other Places	J. Walter Thompson	12 (82)
*Police Surgeon	Ted Bates	40 (110)
The Price Is Right	Viacom	49 (132)
The Protectors	ITC	14 (32)
Salty the Sea Lion	Fox TV	15 (15)
*Survival	J. Walter Thompson	14 (83)
To Tell The Truth	Firestone	22 (137)
Treasure Hunt	Sandy Frank	40 (70)
Truth or Consequences	Metromedia Producers	28 (157)
\$25,000 Pyramid	Viacom	35 (58)
*Untamed World	Leo Burnett	45 (167)
*Wait 'Til Father Gets Home	Rhodes	28 (38)
What's My Line	Viacom	10 (69)
*Wild Kingdom	Bozell & Jacobs	48 (189)
Wild, Wild World of Animals	Time-Life	41 (101)
World At War	Gottlieb/Taffner	41 (48)