

established criteria and the substitution of radically different standards."

Prior to the change, the commission required systems seeking more distant signals than the quota specified in its rules to meet two qualifications: that unique or anomalous circumstances require a departure from the rules and that the additional distant signal importation would not injure local broadcast service. In the course of the proceeding, the commission announced its policy change "explicitly" abandoning the first of the two qualifications, MPAA said.

It said further the commission actually abandoned the second qualification as well by shifting the burden of proving negative impact from the cable system to the broadcaster. MPAA also said that the commission's decision prejudices major issues under consideration in the pending cable economic inquiry. The commission indicates, MPAA said, that unlimited signal carriage will have no impact on local broadcasters in the larger markets. The wording, it said, leads "to the inescapable conclusion that the commission has already made up its mind on many of the issues being debated in the economic inquiry."

It is, MPAA said, "grossly improper for the commission to drastically alter the effect of its signal carriage rules at a time when these rules are being examined in a major inquiry proceeding."

In another filing Metromedia, said the effect of the Artec decision "is to disembowel the fixed signal carriage rules. The commission blinks at reality when it states that it has not changed its rules and that its 'policy alteration' is not drastic."

Metromedia said the changes the commission has made were accomplished in an "unlawful manner." The signal carriage and waiver rules were changed without public notice, publication in the *Federal Register* of the proposed action or an opportunity for interested persons to participate in the proceedings, Metromedia said.

## Qube growing

### Warner's Columbus two-way system makes deal to buy Coaxial CATV there, adding 32,000 subscribers

Warner Cable Corp. announced last week that it was acquiring the Columbus, Ohio, cable TV system of Coaxial Communications and that Warner's two-way Qube service in Columbus would be expanded into this new territory.

The Coaxial system serves approximately 32,000 subscribers in a franchise area of about 72,000 households.

The announcement also said Warner's own Columbus system will have 37,000 cable subscribers by the end of this month and that 29,000 of them will be Qube subscribers. Since Qube was introduced a year ago, Warner reported, the number of Warner cable subscribers has increased by almost 50%, to 37,000 from 25,000. More than 5,000 new Qube subscribers were

said to have been added last month.

Officials said Warner's acquisition of the Coaxial system involved a payment of cash and notes by Warner, plus an exchange of Warner cable systems serving about 15,500 subscribers. Amount of the cash and notes and the locations of the systems to be exchanged were not disclosed. Completion of the transaction was reported to be subject to conditions, including local government approvals and internal Coaxial consents.

Warner said extension of Qube service to homes in the Coaxial area could begin within 90 days after the acquisition is completed and that this is scheduled for the first quarter of 1979.

## Another system puts in lengthy fiber-optic link

### Following on announcement of Teleprompter-Times Fiber hook-up in Lompoc is word that Siecor and RKO have strung 3.5 miles of glass in Joplin

RKO General Inc. has installed a 3.5-mile fiber-optic cable as a link in its Joplin, Mo., CATV system. Just last week, it was reported that Teleprompter had installed an approximately five-mile fiber hook-up on Teleprompter's Lompoc, Calif., system ("In Sync," Dec. 11).

The experiment is a joint venture with Siecor Optical Cables Inc. and RKO subsidiary Cablecom General. Installed on telephone polls this fall, the cable is now relaying about 30 hours of programming daily on the three channels used in the system for locally originated material.

Mostly movies, sports and other taped material acquired by Cablecom to supply its 40 U.S. systems, the programs are carried from the system's downtown studios to its master distribution center, where they are sent out to about 4,000 subscribers via conventional cable. One repeater, or amplifier, was installed midway between the two points.

"Cable system operators have not been notorious for doing their own research and development," said C. Robert Manby, senior vice president of RKO, "so we're trying to find things out ourselves, rather than leaving it up to the [equipment] vendors."

The fiber link is actually made up of two separate pieces of cable spliced together by means of a special heat fusion process, completed on-site by a technician using a microscope set on the tailgate of a station wagon. It contains four optical fibers, each the size of a human hair and each with a current bandwidth capacity of up to 25 channels (although 60-channel capacity is said to be possible). The tubes containing the fibers are filled with a polyurethane compound to resist moisture and freezing, both part of the varied and "hostile" weather conditions in the Joplin area. The



Hang it up. A Cablecom-General technician strings the Joplin fiber-optic cable.

cable itself is 8.2 mm in diameter.

RKO executives stressed that the manageability of the fiber optic cable, as compared to aluminum coaxial cable, enabled an unspecialized cable crew to complete the installation easily in two to three days. The cable is hoped to give readings of fiber optic performance in a practical, working environment, and engineers involved with the project said that results thus far have been satisfactory.

Richard A. Forsling, president of Cablecom, said, "As far as we know, this is the first time a joint venture has been undertaken to create a fiber optic cable specifically for local conditions. We plan to continue this approach of designing our new cables for the special geographical and weather differences in each cable system area." However, other executives involved in the project said there are no specific plans to design fiber optic cables for other Cablecom systems at this time.

## Cable Briefs

**Ready customers.** United Video Inc. announced that by end of first week of availability, approximately 200 cable systems with almost one million subscribers signed up for feeds of superstation WGN-TV Chicago. Station went on satellite Nov. 9.

**Whither pay cable?** Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles, has decided to set up pay cable television committee to look into prospects of medium. John Gudel, board chairman of Board Test Inc., Los Angeles, manufacturer of pay TV equipment, has been named chairman of new committee and will appoint eight to 10 persons involved with pay TV to this unit.

**Cox Cable expansion.** Cox Cable Communications Inc., Atlanta, reports it has been granted franchise to build and operate cable TV system in St. Clair Shores, Mich. Cox proposes to construct 184-mile, 35-channel cable system passing 26,000 homes in city. It will be sixth Cox system in Michigan.